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He said, she said: Gender, sources and affiliation in two Mid-Western daily newspapers

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HE SAID, SHE SAID:

Gender, sources and affiliation in two mid-Western daily newspapers.

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

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HE SAID, SHE SAID:

Gender, sources and affiliation in two mid-Western daily newspapers.

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The purpose of this study was to determine whether women and men were used equally as sources in two daily newspapers. This study also examined the status level of newspaper sources to learn whether high-ranking, official sources dominated the news. This was accomplished through a content analysis of 149 stories from the Omaha World-Herald and 132 stories from the Des Moines Register. A purposive sample was drawn to represent each day of the week beginning with the Monday, February 21 2000, issue of each newspaper and ending with the Sunday, April 8 2000, issue.

Each of the 281 stories was coded to reflect: 1.) The number and gender of all sources quoted or paraphrased; 2.) The category of each news story; 3.) The affiliation and status of each source; and 4:) The gender of the reporter.

Through content analysis, discrepancies regarding how female and male sources were treated in terms of affiliation were also revealed.

Of the 877 sources coded, 637 men were quoted or paraphrased, comprising 73 percent of the source pool. On the other hand, 240 women were quoted or paraphrased, representing 27 percent of the source pool. Consequently, newspaper readers were exposed to information from men almost three times as often as from women. In hard news categories about crime, government and business, males dominated as sources. Of the 594 sources, 464, or 78 percent, were males, compared to the 130, or 22 percent, who were females.

This study also revealed that far more male sources fell into higher-ranking source status levels. Male sources comprised 85 percent of sources considered to be executives based on their authority and decision-making capabilities.

This study confirmed the results of past studies regarding gender and newspaper sources. By ignoring them completely or reducing them to stereotypes, women have been symbolically annihilated in newspapers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sources Have Shaped the News

Sources have been the lifeblood of journalism. Information from government officials, experts, eye witnesses, victims, celebrities and even ordinary citizens has flowed through the veins of news stories carrying messages to readers since newspapers began. Sources have infused articles with shape and substance. They have fleshed out details of a story and added character and credibility to news accounts and features. Without sources, potential stories have shriveled and died.

Researcher Kevin Stoker cited the example of Michelle Caruso, a veteran crime reporter for the *Boston Herald*, who suspected something was amiss in the shooting death of Boston resident Carol Stuart over a decade ago. Carol's

husband, Charles Stuart, told police a black assailant gunned down his wife as the two were driving to dinner. Caruso, however, wondered why an assailant, after first shooting Carol, would simply shoot Charles in his side, and then leave him alive as a witness. After listening to Charles Stuart's 911 call, Caruso was even more dubious and believed Stuart should be the focus of the investigation.[1]

Caruso voiced her concern to police officials, hoping to find someone in an official capacity to quote in her story. Police, however, accepted Charles Stuart's version of the crime and arrested Willie Bennett, a black man identified by Stuart. Without a credible source to confirm Caruso's suspicions about the husband's culpability, editors at the *Boston Herald* decided Caruso had no story and ran the official version instead. "We came one inch away from writing a story about all the doubts I had," Caruso recalled.[2]

Caruso's skepticism mounted as the story unfolded. But professional standards of journalism and years of tradition have compelled journalists to cite sources for their stories. Without a source willing to be quoted, Caruso was forced to write her story based on what official sources were saying and doing rather than heed her instincts that something was terribly wrong with the investigation.

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[1] Kevin Stoker, "Existential Objectivity: Freeing Journalists to be Ethical," Journal of Mass Media Ethics 10 (1995): 5-22.

[2] C. Lyndon, "The Boston Hoax: She Fought it, He Bought It," Washington Journalism Review (1990): 59.

Eventually, Charles Stuart, the husband, confessed to the crime and the newspaper realized its reliance on official sources cost it the real story. If Caruso had written a story describing her concerns, would public pressure have forced the police to pursue other suspects? Would a story that challenged Stuart's version of the crime have prevented the arrest of an innocent man?

These questions have haunted journalists as they have debated the pros and cons of professional standards that have traditionally favored official sources in news stories. The power of news sources has not always been as dramatic as it was in the Carol Stuart murder investigation, but many researchers have maintained that who sources were and what they have said has affected news in measurable, and not always positive, ways.

In fact, some researchers have pointed out that news has been as much about what people have said as it has been about what people have actually done. University researchers G. Michael Killenberg and Rob Anderson noted that direct quotations and paraphrased comments from sources have strengthened personal reputations, prompted public debate, raised public awareness and exposed social issues.[3] The authors added that news has indeed emerged from what sources have said.

University professor Dan Berkowitz and graduate student Douglas Beach concurred. Journalists have typically learned about events and issues through

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[3] G. Michael Killenberg and Rob Anderson, "What Is a Quote: Practical, Rhetorical and Ethical Concerns for Journalists," Journal of Mass Media Ethics 8 (1993): 37-54.

sources. In fact, the authors pointed out that interaction with sources has frequently shaped how stories were written.[4]

Berkowitz and Beach noted that scholarly research has produced the same results: typically, more than half of all news stories have originated "from sources' efforts to have their voices heard in the mass media." Just as typically, most of these sources were government officials or top-level executives associated with businesses or interest groups.[5]

Gaye Tuchman, a college professor, book editor and one of the early researchers who raised concern over the image of women in the media, compared news to a window on the world where one learns about the institutions, leaders and lifestyles of the world.[6] One's view of the world, Tuchman asserted, was shaped by the size of the window. If the window was a small porthole, readers caught only a glimpse of reality, she observed, but if the window was a large picture window, readers enjoyed a broader view.

Considering that sources have made and defined news, who said what in a news story has been crucial to understanding how the material was presented to readers and ultimately how readers viewed an issue. Consequently, this thesis examined the gender, affiliation and status of the sources used in a constructed week sample during 2000 of the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Des Moines Register.*

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[4] Dan Berkowitz and Douglas W. Beach, "News Sources and News Context: The Effect of Routine News, Conflict and Proximity," Journalism Quarterly 70 (Spring 1993): 4-12.
[5] Ibid., 4.
[6] Gaye Tuchman, Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality (Beverly Hills, CA.: Sage, 1978).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Who Sources Have Been;

The Concept of Gender;

Factors Affecting Source Selection

Who Sources Have Been

An historical overview: the role of sources

From the first news-writing course a budding journalist takes, he or she is quickly introduced to the importance of using sources through direct quotations and paraphrased attributions. Sources have been defined as people or documents reporters draw information from. Sources have been quoted directly or had their comments and thoughts paraphrased in stories. The reporter's own opinion has given way to what others have said about issues and events or what document research has revealed.

Personal testimony from sources, observed textbook writer J.P. Jones, has been crucial to any story because it enhanced the believability of a story and made it more understandable to the average reader.[7]

D. Nelson and J.A. Wollert wrote in their textbook that quotes from sources have made news accounts sound more natural and interesting.[8] A 1970s-era textbook by Ralph Izard, Hugh Culbertson and Daniel Lambert actually offered a formula for inserting comments from news sources into stories. They advised including one direct quote for every two paraphrased quotations.[9]

While more contemporary textbooks have not recommended adhering to such a strict template, Carole Rich's 2000 text advised students to use sources regardless of the story topic. She further instructed journalists to paraphrase routine information and save direct quotes for colorful statements and expressions of opinion.[10] Quotations breathe life into a story, she added, and paraphrased information has provided another voice for conveying important information to the reader.[11] Few stories read well without human beings giving their take on an issue or event.

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[7] J.P. Jones, Gathering and Writing the News (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1976), 20.
[8] D. Nelson and J.A. Wollert, Media Writing: News for the Mass Media (Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1985): 18.
[9] Ralph S. Izard, Hugh M. Culbertson and Donald A. Lambert, Fundamentals of News Reporting (Dubuque, IA.: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1971), 5-10.
[10] Carole Rich, Writing and Reporting the News, (Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2000), 29-31.
[11] Ibid., 32.

Readers have always needed to hear the voices of sources. In fact, newspaper readers have judged the credibility of what has been reported about an issue or event based on the use of direct quotations from sources.

In their 1993 study, Rhonda Gibson and Dolf Zillmann asked participants to read a story that described the safety of amusement parks. Half of the respondents read a story with direct quotes that challenged the safety record of the parks while the other half read the same story minus the direct quotes. Those who read the story with the direct quotes considered the story more dramatic and emotional. More importantly, though, they questioned the safety of amusement parks more often than did those whose stories omitted the direct, personal testimony.[12]

Attribution to sources has been key to journalism, especially in public affairs reporting, where, in addition to sharing factual information, sources have conveyed important nuances and opinions regarding events.

In their 1997 textbook, Fred Fedler, John Bender, Lucinda Davenport and Paul Kostyu urged reporters to attribute information about crimes, natural disasters and public safety issues to official sources early and often. The authors added that controversial information and matters of opinion should definitely be attributed to someone, hopefully an authority.

Readers, the authors continued, needed to know where the information

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12 Rhonda Gibson and Dolf Zillmann, "The Impact of Quotation in News Reports on Issue Perception," Journalism Quarterly 70 (Winter 1993): 793-800.

originated so they could judge its veracity. Because reporters were typically not experts in all the stories they covered, they have relied on the expertise of sources instead. Frequent attribution, direct quotes and paraphrased information have been used to give readers a better sense of an event or issue.[13]

A 1990 study by Dominic L. Lasorsa and Stephen D. Resse noted that the practice of using sources to tell a story has been firmly entrenched in journalistic tradition. Attributing information to a person, along with his or her position or affiliation, has been a fundamental concept of story writing, as well as a signal to readers. "It alerts the reader both to the expertise and the motives of the source," the authors concluded.[14]

The media's selection of sources has determined how stories were told, or framed, Lasorsa and Resse continued. Examining sources used in a story has made it possible for researchers to learn who has access to the press and how issues are presented, or framed. Consequently, an exploration of news sources has been considered crucial to understanding how readers have perceived the news. After all, Lasorsa and Resse pointed out, readers cannot judge information they have not read or understand views that have never been articulated.[15]

Whether information was placed inside quotation marks or paraphrased, journalists have relied on sources to tell stories. In fact, Frederick Fico and

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[13] Fred Fedler, John R. Bender, Lucinda Davenport and Paul E. Kostyu, Reporting for the Media, (Fort Worth, TX.: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1997), 201-211.
[14] Dominic L. Lasorsa and Stephen D. Resse. "News Source Use in the Crash of 1987: A Study of Four National Media," Journalism Quarterly 67 (Spring 1990): 60-71.
[15] Ibid., 60.

William Cote observed that news was really nothing more than "what sources tell reporters."[16]

Along those lines, journalist Bob Greene revealed in his book of World War II recollections that part of the joy of his job was letting people tell their stories. Everyone in the book had a story, he observed, that contributed to the fabric of society.[17] Through the stories and experiences of individuals, America has been able to learn and grow.

What would happen, however, if only certain people told their stories? In Greene's book, men recounted their wartime experiences. Where were the women?

Greene's book was ripe with descriptions of battle, fear and fatigue as he chronicled the lives of young soldiers fighting for their country. Only an occasional reference to women appeared in his book. One could argue that Greene's book was about battle experiences and that his focus was on how these young men fought for their country, then returned home to overcome both physical and mental wounds.

What stories would women have told, though, had they been asked? True, women were not combatants, but women served as nurses and volunteers. All women experienced the war as gender roles shifted drastically and forced many into the work force, where they took up the slack when men left for foreign

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[16] Frederick Fico and William Cote, "Fairness and Balance in Election Reporting: the 1994 Governor's Race in Minnesota," Newspaper Research Journal 18 (Summer/Fall 1997): 52.
[17] Bob Greene, Duty. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2000).

battlefields. What were women feeling about the dramatic change? Who cared for their children absent today's well-established day care centers? These questions were not raised in Greene's book, but their answers would have painted a more complete picture of World War II.

Veteran Washington reporter Helen Thomas approached the problem from a personal angle as she recounted her travels with President Lyndon Johnson aboard Air Force One. After a trip or campaign stop, Johnson typically settled back into his seat, poured himself a scotch, and instructed his press secretary to "bring the boys in here," referring, of course, to the contingent of male journalists who accompanied him. Thomas wrote in her book that she never failed to correct the president's language with this reminder: "We're not all boys, Mr. President."[18]

Ultimately, that is the point. Men and women have comprised society equally, and the views, aspirations and opinions of both sexes should have been considered valuable. The dreams, desires, foibles and triumphs of women have been neglected. Their stories should be told.

Imagine for a moment that newspapers printed only stories in which Roman Catholics were quoted or that only registered Republicans were used as sources. Readers could rightly object that the news was not accurate because the reporting reflected the views of only Catholics or Republicans.

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[18] Helen Thomas, Thanks for the Memories, Mr. President. (New York, NY.: Scribner, 2002), 71-72.

In a democracy where diversity of thought and opinion has been prized, the fact that predominately male voices have traditionally been reflected in the news should be unsettling. Information has been regarded as the currency of power. Yet how knowledgeable have Americans really been when they have been exposed to a narrow slice of viewpoints and beliefs?

The Concept of Gender

Setting the stage: the symbolic annihilation of women

A theoretical perspective must be considered before the literature about source usage and gender is reviewed. In their 1978 book *Hearth & Home*, Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels and James Benet collected studies presented during a 1975 conference exploring the portrayal of women in the media. Tuchman set the stage for future research and discussion when she noted that the absence of realistic female images on TV shows, in magazines and on the pages of newspapers constituted the "symbolic annihilation" of women.[19] In other words, the mass media systematically ignored women completely or reduced them to stereotypes, Tuchman explained. This idea has resonated throughout literature and has been a frequent theme in gender and media studies.

Tuchman specifically applied the concept of symbolic annihilation to newspapers and noted that access to the news media and the ability to make

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[19] Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels and James Benet, Hearth & Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media, (New York, N.Y.: Oxford Press, 1978), 8.

news has actually been stratified. While the media have been more accessible to some social movements, lower class people and females have been cut off from the ability to influence a journalist to cover his or her issues, Tuchman pointed out.[20]

Equally distressing, Tuchman observed, has been the classification of news into hard and soft categories. Hard news has been defined as timely stories dealing with topics such as government, war and business. The soft news label has been affixed to stories that have appealed to readers' emotions and have not been as timely. Typically, women's issues have been labeled soft news by journalists and deemed not as deserving of well-placed coverage by reporters and editors, Tuchman pointed out. She cited a 1965 story in the *New York Times* that announced Betty Friedan's formation of N.O.W. as an example. That story appeared on a page between a recipe for turkey stuffing and an article about an executive returning to Saks Fifth Avenue. The story's placement indicated that the founding of N.O.W. was considered soft news and not worthy of serious consideration.[21]

Harvey Molotch examined women's news pages in the Tuchman et al. book and concluded that newspapers, even on pages labeled "women's news," reported issues selectively through a man's sense of the world. Women received little attention, either as audience members or as newsmakers, thus perpetuating

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[20] Ibid., 189.
[21] Ibid., 202.

their symbolic annihilation. In fact, he characterized news as men talking to men, except on the women's pages. There, he said, women who worked for men talked to women.[22]

Although Molotch and Tuchman were writing more than 20 years ago, Lauren Danner and Susan Walsh found that little had changed when they studied how the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* covered the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. The authors discovered that both newspapers shied away from coverage of substantive issues. The conference actually addressed "issues of development, human rights, and women's roles within the context of economic, political and social change," Danner and Walsh wrote. Newspaper articles, however, focused on conflict among participants rather than on the strategies devised to help women economically and politically in third world countries. News stories also relied on stereotypes of women and sought to emphasize the desirability of motherhood over a career.[23]

This study will be explored in more depth later, as will what many have considered to be a gendered interpretation of news. Danner, Walsh and Tuchman et al. have raised important questions: how can women thrive when they have been so underrepresented in the media? How can women become

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[22] Harvey Molotch, "The News of Women and the Work of Men" in Hearth & Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media. (New York, NY.: Oxford University Press, 1978), 181-182.

[23] Lauren Danner and Susan Walsh, "'Radical' Feminists and 'Bickering' Women: Backlash in U.S. Media Coverage of the United Nations Fourth Conference on Women," Critical Studies in Mass Communications 16 (1999): 63-84.

valued participants in society when they have been so marginalized through stereotypes?

He said, she said, but mostly he said

Pick a newspaper - any newspaper - and page through it. Read through some of the stories on the front page. Check out the metro section devoted to local news, and then glance at the business section, maybe selecting one or two articles to read more carefully. Chances are very good that the stories will be about what men did and said, regardless of what newspaper was chosen or what story was read. Quotes and paraphrased information will be routinely attributed to males. Paragraph after paragraph will either end or begin with the journalistic form of attribution "he said."

Women have been grossly underrepresented in newspapers, Lynn M. Zoch and Judy VanSlyke Turk discovered. In fact, results of their study prompted the researchers to offer this conclusion:

> News is made and information controlled almost exclusively by men acting in some official capacity, with official status. This frame calls attention to what men do and say and ... directs attention away from women.[24]

Zoch and VanSlyke Turk analyzed 1,126 stories published between 1986 and 1996 on the front page and metro section page of three daily newspapers in

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[24] Lynn M. Zoch and Judy VanSlyke Turk, "Women Making News: Gender as a Variable in Source Selection and Use," Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly 75 (Winter 1998): 762-775.

the southeastern United States. They discovered that almost 68 percent of the sources used were males while only 20 percent were females. The remaining 11 percent could not be identified by gender, either because initials were used or the source's name was gender neutral.[25]

The authors grouped the 1,126 articles by topic to include stories that dealt with government, crime, business, education and culture, to name a few. Regardless of the topic, male sources dominated. Representation was most balanced in education stories, with 56.7 percent of the sources males and 34.7 percent females. The culture category included 56 percent males and 32.9 females.[26]

In the Zoch and Van Slyke Turk study; male sources outnumbered female sources regardless of the scope of the story, but the imbalance was most evident in international stories. In those stories, a scant 14 percent of the sources were females while 61.5 percent were males.[27]

When looking at source affiliation, or what organization or cause named sources represented, the study confirmed the results of other studies by revealing that official sources dominated with 63 percent of the sources associated with a government agency or department. Zoch and VanSlyke Turk speculated that because male officials outnumbered female officials, journalists ended up heavily favoring male officials. The fact the women were seldom cited

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[25] Ibid., 769.

[26] Ibid., 769.

[27] Ibid., 769.

as sources, the two wrote, sent a message to readers that women were unimportant in both public and private life. Further, such a worldview suggested that women "are virtually without power and thus have no access to information that would be of use to the public."[28]

The researchers also examined the gender of the reporters in their study, discovering that male and female reporters both shared "a preference for and reliance on official sources."[29] However, the study also found that female reporters were more likely to attribute information to female sources than were their male counterparts. Slightly more than one quarter (26.5 percent) of the sources used in the 280 articles written by female reporters were females. In the 592 stories written by males, only 18.9 percent of the sources were females.[30]

Women as newspaper sources

Research has revealed that women have been ignored, underrepresented or stereotyped when serving as newspaper sources, thus supporting the concept of symbolic annihilation. Jane Delano Brown et al. found that only 10 percent of the sources that appeared on the front pages of two prestige papers and four North Carolina papers were females. The authors concluded in their 1989 study that women were vastly underrepresented regardless of story origin, and noted that government officials, executives and men dominated the front

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[28] Ibid, 771.

[29] Ibid., 771.

[30] Ibid., 771.

page.[31]

Junetta Davis documented the dearth of females in news stories in a constructed week sample of four Oklahoma newspapers, two newspapers from the West Coast and two from the East Coast. She employed a slightly different twist, however, and coded stories based on whether women were the main characters of each story. Of the 5,500 stories scrutinized in the eight dailies, only 472, or a mere 8.6 percent, featured women as the main characters. Davis discovered that 2,847 stories, or 51.8 percent, included men as the main characters. In other words, males appeared as main characters far more frequently than did women.[32]

Davis also discovered that:

- Women were more often featured in shorter stories with smaller headlines.
- Men were eight times more likely to be the main character in front-page stories, 14 times more likely in sports stories, 10 times more likely in editorials and 13 time more likely in business-page stories. Not surprisingly, women were more likely to be the main character in stories on women's pages.

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[31] Jane Delano Brown, Carl R. Bybee, Stanley T. Wearden and Dulcie Murdock Straughan, "Invisible Power: Newspaper News Sources and Limits of Diversity," Journalism Quarterly 64 (Spring 1987): 50-51.
[32] Junetta Davis, "Sexist Bias in Eight Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly 59 (Autumn 1982): 456-460.

- Men were quoted in 54.7 percent of all hard news stories while women were quoted in only 8.5 percent of hard news stories. Females outnumbered male sources in soft news where they were quoted in 12.5 percent of the stories compared to 8.5 percent of the stories that quoted men.
- When women elbowed their way into stories, they surfaced in domestic or subordinate roles or as sex objects. Women appeared less often based on their expertise.
- Finally, frequency data showed that women were identified more often by personal information including attire, marital and parental status and physical appearance.[33]

James Potter replicated the Davis methodology in an examination of front-page stories from five prestige papers during two one-week periods in 1913, 1933, 1964 and 1983. From a sample of 2,224 stories, females were the main characters in only 162 stories, or 7.3 percent of the total. Males appeared as main characters in 1,371 stories, or 61.6 percent, while both genders were featured in 72 (3.2 percent) stories. He asserted that women were even less prominent in the prestige papers.[34]

Potter pointed out that the number of stories with female main characters had actually declined, and noted that 93 stories featured females in 1913; 37

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[33] Ibid., 457-458.
[34] W. James Potter, "Gender Representation in Elite Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly 62 (1985): 636-640.

stories in 1933; 19 stories in 1963 and only 14 stories in 1983. Females rarely appeared in stories about government, business or science, a result that mirrored the Davis study. [35]

Women were also absent from the business pages. Marilyn Greenwald focused her content analysis on the business sections of the Columbus, Ohio, *Dispatch* and the Louisville, Kentucky, *Courier-Journal*. She found that women were underrepresented as sources and subjects of stories, even when the reporters or editors were women themselves. In her coding scheme, Greenwald examined each front page of the business section for the number of stories in which a woman or a women's issue was the main topic of the article. If a female was the featured topic of the story, she labeled her as a "main character."

Greenwald discovered that of the 108 stories coded from the *Dispatch*, women were the main subjects in just one story and four business briefs (short stories), while men were the main subjects of 31 stories and 10 briefs. Females in the *Dispatch* stories were quoted or cited as experts in 11 stories and one brief while men were quoted in 31 stories and 10 briefs.[36]

Results were similar for the 116 stories in the sample from the *Courier-Journal*. Women were the subjects of six stories and four business briefs, while

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[35] Ibid., 638.

[36] Marilyn S. Greenwald, "Gender Representation in Newspaper Business Sections," Newspaper Research Journal (Winter 1990): 68-74.

men appeared as subjects in 29 stories and 22 briefs. Six stories and one brief quoted women as experts while 59 stories and 12 briefs quoted men as experts.[37]

A woman edited the business section of the *Courier-Journal* at the time of the study, Greenwald observed, while a man edited the *Dispatch's* business section. The only noticeable difference Greenwald uncovered was that slightly more females had bylines in the *Courier-Journal's* business section.[38]

This finding raised the question of whether female reporters were more likely to cite female sources. In the Zoch and VanSlyke Turk study discussed earlier, researchers found female reporters included more women as sources. A study of women editors in seven women's magazines addressed the issue. When Lee Jolliffe and Terri Catlett examined issues of the magazines from 1965 to1985, they did not find less sex-role stereotyping in content when women had editorial control. However, they found that as the proportion of female editors increased, the number of articles that featured women as independent and self-reliant also increased.[39]

In a 1999 study of two television news programs, *60 Minutes* and *Hard Copy*, researchers discovered that female reporters sought out more female

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[37] Ibid., 72.
[38] Ibid., 73.
[39] Lee Jolliffe and Terri Catlett, "Women Editors at the 'Seven Sisters' Magazines, 1965-1985: Did They Make a Difference," Journalism Quarterly 71 (Winter 1994): 800-808.

sources than male reporters did, but overall, female reporters still interviewed more men.[40]

Traditional role of sources

It would be an over simplification to conclude that only men have served as news sources and probe no further. Actually, only certain men, specifically those in powerful government or business positions, have typically served as sources. Carpenters, cable TV installers and carpet cleaners, regardless of gender, have rarely found their way into news stories.

Leon Sigal took a giant step toward understanding the nature of who news sources were by studying how journalists obtained their information. His 1973 book was one of the earliest and most comprehensive examinations of how reporters unearthed the raw material for news stories. Sigal's findings have routinely been cited in scholarly research and portions of his study have frequently been replicated.

Sigal spelled out the importance of news sources early in his book and observed that the "specific content of news depends on the exchange of information between newsmen and their sources."[41]

To that end, Sigal analyzed front-page stories that ran in *The New York*

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[40] Maria Elizabeth Grabe, Shuhua Zhou and Brooke Barnett, "Sourcing and Reporting in News Magazine Programs: 60 Minutes Versus Hard Copy," Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly 76 (Summer 1999): 293-311.

[41] Leon Sigal, Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking, (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1973), 37.

Times and *The Washington Post* during two-week periods in 1949, 1954, 1959, 1964 and 1969. His sample included 599 stories from the *Times* and 547 articles from the *Post*. Sigal sought to determine the paths by which information reached reporters and became page one stories. He grouped these paths, or "channels," into three categories: routine, informal and enterprise.

"Routine" channels included: 1) Official proceedings such as trials, hearings and elections; 2) Press releases and reports from news broadcasts; 3) Press conferences and briefings by official spokesmen; and 4) Nonspontaneous events such as speeches and ceremonies.[42]

"Informal" channels included four components: 1) Background briefings; 2) Leaks, 3) Non-government proceedings such as labor conventions and meetings; and 4) News reports from other news organizations, including editorials. [43]

The third channel, "enterprise," was defined as: 1) Reporter-initiated interviews; 2) Spontaneous events such as riots or fires that a reporter actually witnessed; 3) Independent research from books, documents and statistical data; and 4) The reporter's own conclusions and analysis.[44]

According to Sigal's study, information from routine channels outnumbered enterprise channels by well over two to one at both the *Times* and

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[42] Ibid., 120.
[43] Ibid., 120.
[44] Ibid., 120.

Post. He found that 60 percent of the news on the front page originated from official proceedings, press releases and formal comments and press conferences by recognized spokesmen. The implication, he pointed out, was "that stories usually emerge through routine channels."[45]

In examining who was quoted and paraphrased in these two prestige papers, Sigal discovered that "the most important sources of information are officials of the U.S. government." [46] Nearly one-half of all sources referred to on the front pages of the *Times* and *Post* were government officials. Sigal observed that because officials were such important sources, they exerted considerable influence over news content.[47] The higher up an official was in the government structure, the better his chances were of making news, Sigal noted, adding that the results of his study illustrated the value newspapers placed on "official utterances" by government sources.[48]

While Sigal did not consider the gender of sources in his landmark study, he used male pronouns throughout his book. Reporters were consistently referred to as "newsmen" while spokespeople for organizations were always called "spokesmen." Considering the time frame of Sigal's study, females were perhaps not prominent enough either in newsrooms as reporters or in government and business infrastructures where they would become sources. People were only beginning to realize that language could and should be free

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[45] Ibid., 123.
[46] Ibid., 123.
[47] Ibid., 60.
[48] Ibid., 70

from gender bias when Sigal wrote his book in the early 1970s. While the use of masculine-oriented language was a sad reflection of what was once the norm, Sigal's work successfully documented how heavily journalists relied on government officials as sources.

Official sources dominated

Many researchers have continued Sigal's examination of how reporters obtained information and the sources they have used. In his 1979 book, Herbert Gans explored the use of official sources further and described such sources as "elites."[49]

Elite sources met two criteria, Gans explained. They were available to reporters, often because of their positions in business or the public eye, and they were suitable to act as sources.[50] Because these sources were centrally positioned in the power systems, Gans observed, they provided a great deal of information to reporters. He added that reporters favored "bureaucratic sources who can provide a regular, credible and ultimately usable flow of information..."[51]

In a 1998 study, Brian Massey refined the definition of elite sources when he described nonelite sources as "citizen organizations and individuals with no institutional affiliation."[52] Like Massesy, researchers have used the words "elite"

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[49] Herbert Gans, Deciding What's News, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1979), 70-84.
[50] Ibid., 76.
[51] Ibid., 81.
[52] Brian Massey, "Civic Journalism and Nonelite Sourcing: Making Routine Newswork of Community Connectedness," Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly 75 (Summer 1998): 396.

and "official" almost interchangeably to describe sources associated with the power structures of society and affiliated with established organizations, agencies, governments and institutions.

In a content analysis of front-page stories that appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and four North Carolina newspapers, researchers found stories peppered with official, or elite, sources. Delano Brown et al. examined stories that ran during two constructed week periods in 1979 and 1980. With a total of 846 stories that employed 5,248 sources, the authors discovered that 31 percent of these sources were affiliated with the United States government.[53]

Borrowing terminology from Sigal's study, the authors also found that 56 percent of the stories in national papers and 64 percent of wire service stories in state papers relied heavily on routine channels for gathering information.[54]

Delano Brown et al. explored the affiliation of sources to determine what organizations or entities sources were associated with. Their most notable finding was the heavy reliance on executives in top positions as news sources. "This seems to be a clear indication of the dominance of elite news sources," they concluded.[55]

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[53] Delano Brown et al. "Invisible Power: Newspaper News Sources...,"54.
[54] Ibid., 51.

[55] Ibid., 49.

Sources offered different slants on content

The use of official sources also surfaced in a review of news articles that reported on the 1989 wreck of the Exxon Valdez tanker and subsequent oil spill in Alaska's Prince William Sound. Conrad Smith noticed that elite sources accounted for 61 percent of the sources used in the *Anchorage Daily News* and three prestige papers. The elite sources included representatives of the Alaskan and federal government as well as oil industry executives.[56] An emphasis on elite sources was especially prevalent when Smith examined how frequently sources were cited either in direct quotes or paraphrased information. Government representatives accounted for 51 percent of the citations, while oil industry executives accounted for 22 percent of the citations. Non-elite sources, labeled as "individuals" in Smith's coding scheme, appeared in just 16 percent of the citations.[57]

Sources portrayed the oil spill differently, Smith found. He wrote that:

> Sources representing the State of Alaska and the Bush administration portrayed the spill as a major disaster, but the oil industry did not. Alaskan government sources perceived considerably more damage from the spilled oil than Bush administration or oil industry sources.[58]

Non-elite sources, or individuals who were not affiliated with government, business or scientific organizations, appeared in stories about the oil spill to offer

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[56] Conrad Smith, "News Sources and Power Elites in News Coverage of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill." Journalism Quarterly 70 (Summer 1993): 393-403.
[57] Ibid., 393.

58 Ibid., 399.

comments and observations as "eye-witnesses" or people who lived near the spill. Their role in the story was to add color and detail, not provide an expert voice.

Lasorsa and Resse discovered further evidence of the reliance on elite sources in their content analysis of news coverage of the 1987 stock market crash. The authors studied news accounts of the crash in the *CBS Evening News, Newsweek, The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal.* The print media, they learned, utilized more Wall Street sources in addition to using more sources in general, while CBS favored government sources.[59]

Since sources with different affiliations said different things about the causes and effects of the crash, the authors raised this question: did news consumers get a different view of the crash depending on the medium they sought information from? [60]

The authors discovered that readers were indeed treated to different takes on the stock market crash based on who was quoted in a story, thus answering their question. Business sources, for example, blamed the crash primarily on interest rates and cited the national deficit as a secondary reason. Sources identified only as Wall Street sources were heavily used in newspaper stories. They blamed the crash on computerized trading practices. On the other hand, government sources were heavily used in TV reporting and blamed the crash primarily on the national deficit, then cited computerized trading practices

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[59] Lasorsa and Resse, "News Source Use..." 60-71.
[60] Ibid., 118.

as a secondary reason. Academic sources pointed to a large number of factors that contributed to the crash. They were the only sources who mentioned that the inequity in the distribution of wealth could have been a factor in the crash.[61]

In a slightly different take on the use of elite sources, Shirley Ramsey discovered that journalists from eight major newspapers used organizational spokespersons as sources in science and technology stories more than they relied on scientists. Ramsey's content analysis of stories from 1991 to 1996 found that spokespersons appeared as sources in almost 30 percent of the articles. She pointed out that these organizational spokespersons were utilized extensively, often without accompanying quotes from scientists and researchers.[62]

There was one notable exemption to the preponderance of elite sources in newspapers. According to a 1991 study by Kathleen A. Hansen, enterprise stories appeared exempt from the reliance on elite sources. When journalists initiated a story idea, then followed through with interviews and research, more ordinary citizens made their way into the news. In her analysis of 60 enterprise stories, Hansen discovered that only 40 percent of the sources were government or other officials. She noticed that enterprise stories included more references to

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[61] Lasorsa and Reese, "News Source Use...," 67.
[62] Shirley Ramsey, "A Benchmark Study of Elaboration and Sourcing in Science Stories for Eight American Newspapers," Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly 76 (Spring 1999): 87-98.

people and printed documents that came "from outside official government circles."[63]

Even when the topic of enterprise endeavors was government, Hansen observed that reporters incorporated views and information from those outside the governmental realm. Enterprise stories featured:

> ...(A)verage citizens who were able to speak eloquently about the topic of the project's coverage because of their perspective as members of the community.[64]

Hansen suggested that enterprise stories better reflected the goals of informational and source diversity since these stories incorporated fewer government officials.[65]

Therese L. Lueck and Huayun Chang found another exception to the preponderance of official sources in their study of the *Chicago Tribune's* "WomanNews" section, which was launched in 1991. The authors noted that the diverse mix of stories found on these pages also featured a diverse mix of sources, and articles represented the view points of women whose experiences were different from those of white, mainstream society.[66]

Elected officials as sources

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[63] Kathleen Hansen, "Source Diversity and Newspaper Enterprise Journalism," Journalism Quarterly 68 (Fall 1991): 474-482.
[64] Ibid., 479.
[65] Ibid., 479.
[66] Therese L. Lueck and Huayun Chang, "Tribune's 'WomanNews' Gives Voice to Women's Issues," Newspaper Research Journal 23 (Winter 2002): 59-72.

Government officials, whether they have served on the federal or local level, have always been considered newsmakers. They have been in unique positions to make news.

The assumption, Tuchman contended, has been that elected officials spoke for the government. They were considered "in the know" and reporters seldom questioned the right of elected officials to make news. One unfortunate result was that journalists were not always able to verify the facts imparted by officials.[67]

Have there been problems with using elected officials?

Sigal summarized the concern when he noted, "(w)ho makes the news affects who governs and who opposes." Those who made the news, he added, had the ability to shape the direction of political life in America. The press acted to mute other voices by amplifying the views of officials.[68] While official sources could be appropriate fonts of information, their inclusion actually silenced other voices. Further, officials were seen as more legitimate and their legitimacy was reinforced every time they appeared in print.

Hansen agreed:

> When news content is heavily laden with official government statements, comments and interviews and government statistics and documents, the perspectives and views of other affiliated sources (e.g. labor, education, business, public interest groups) are slighted. Unaffiliated sources (average citizens) have even less access for their viewpoints and concerns.[69]

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[67] Tuchman, Making News..., 89-95.
[68] Sigal, Reporters and Officials..., 37.
[69] Hansen, "Source Diversity and Newspaper Enterprise Journalism...," 475.

The possible exclusion of other viewpoints surfaced in a study of two natural disasters that plagued the United States in the fall of 1989. Susanna Hornig, Lynne Walters and Julie Templin reviewed newspaper coverage of Hurricane Hugo and the Loma Prieta earthquake. From their study of 118 articles, the authors found that elected officials were quoted almost as often as were all other types of experts combined.[70] The authors believed that journalists covering these disasters relied more on government officials than on scientific and technical experts who could have shared useful information regarding safety.[71]

Elected officials surfaced as primary sources in 56 percent of the stories examined as part of John Soloski's participant observation study of a daily newspaper with a circulation of about 17,000.[72]

Soloski examined 632 locally written stories during a one-year period. He discovered that after elected officials, business executives and prominent lawyers served as primary sources in 14 percent of the stories. The superintendent of public schools served as the primary source in eight percent of the news accounts. Soloski concluded that the paper's news accounts were firmly rooted in the power structures of the community as evidenced by the paper's reliance on prominent people as sources.[73]

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[70] Susanna Hornig, Lynne Walters and Julie Templin, "Voices in the News: Newspaper Coverage of Hurricane Hugo and The Loma Prieta Earthquake," Newspaper Research Journal 12 (Summer 1991): 32-45.
[71] Ibid., 32.
[72] John Soloski, "Sources and Channels of Local News," Journalism Quarterly 66 (Winter 1989): 864-870.
[73] Ibid., 866.

The author also pointed out that such heavy reliance on official sources actually legitimized society's power structure. Consequently, prevailing thoughts, institutions and social structures tended to be preserved and even enhanced by news stories. He added that:

> The stress journalists place on reporting "facts" means that news stories reify the world for both news consumers and journalists. Reification means that what is essentially a product of human creation is perceived as being a fact.[74]

A 1995 study by Michael Salwen, however, partially refuted the preponderance of elected officials as sources by studying coverage of Hurricane Andrew. Salwen examined whether news sources in business and government were quoted more frequently than unaffiliated sources in newspaper stories regarding the hurricane. In terms of quantity, Salwen discovered that unaffiliated individuals were the most frequently quoted sources. Individual men and women with no affiliation other than victim provided vivid details of how the disaster affected their lives. [75]

Salwen also explored the difference between how official and unaffiliated sources were used in news stories. Official sources, including military and business sources, lent their professional expertise to stories while unaffiliated sources emoted. These unaffiliated sources were portrayed as victims and

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[74] Ibid., 866.
[75] Michael Salwen, "News of Hurricane Andrew: The Agenda of Sources and the Sources' Agendas," Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly 72 (Winter 1995): 826-840.

"objects of pity" who provided a human-interest angle to news accounts of the disaster.[76]

Factors Affecting Source Selection

News as a gendered construct

Various factors have influenced a reporter's decision to use one source over another. In a sense, the very definition of news has affected source selection, as have the practices of newsgathering and the technical constraints of the medium.

The very concept of news, Lana F. Rakow and Kimberlie Kranich pointed out, has actually been a masculine narrative that reinforced masculine institutions and values.

The authors observed that when women appeared as sources or subjects in news accounts, they represented institutionalized, or stereotypical, versions of women. Women appeared as the mothers of crime or disaster victims or as the wives of newsmakers. Women typically were not used as sources because of their accomplishments or activities. Because of this gendered nature of news, Rakow and Kranich concluded that women functioned "not as speaking subjects but as signs." [77]

While journalism textbooks and scholars have concurred that defining

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[76] Ibid., 835.

[77] Lana F. Rakow and Kimberlie Kranich, "Woman as Sign in Television News," Journal of Communication 41 (Winter 1991): 8-23.

news was a challenge, the Fedler et al. book described news as events or issues that represented a departure from the norm. The authors also described news as the gathering of information that served the reader and the coverage of current events, ideas and issues. Fedler et al. added that news could also be tomorrow's history. On the other hand, the authors conceded that news was sometimes whatever an editor decided it was or something that helped a paper sell its product and kept its advertisers happy.[78]

Fedler et al. noted that the characteristics of news, which have frequently been referred to as news values, have included timeliness, importance, prominence, proximity, oddity and humor.[79] Michael Mencher's textbook added drama and conflict to the list because these qualities have increased the action and interest in news stories have held for readers.[80]

Hard news, Fedler et al. wrote, usually referred to serious and timely stories about important topics, while soft news typically described features and human-interest stories that appealed to the emotions of readers.[81]

In her examination of *TIME* Magazine's top 100 people of the century and the ABC series *The Century*, Carolyn Kitch wondered how women could have been so excluded from the story describing the century. She suggested that it may have been because the stories that journalists defined as newsworthy, especially in a line-up of the century's movers and shakers, exemplified "triumph,

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[78] Fedler et al, Reporting for the Media..., 91-92.
[79] Ibid., 92-95.
[80] M. Mencher, Basic News Writing. (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Publisher, 1984.) 12.
[81] Fedler, et al, Reporting for the Media..., 95-96.

individualism, and progress,"[82] which correlated with more masculine values. The rise of feminism during the twentieth century, Kitch pointed out, "was a matter of collective rather than individual achievement."[83] That made the story of feminism not as appealing when viewed through more masculine definitions of what was newsworthy.

In Molotch's chapter in the *Hearth & Home* book cited earlier, news was actually described as a social process, with what passed for news dependent upon who talked to whom. Consequently, Molotch pointed out, in the creation of news, women have been in an inferior position to men. In essence, the mass media represented the powerful talking to the less powerful and the primary news need was to perpetuate the status quo.[84]

Molotch further argued that because men have controlled the news business, male preferences for what constituted news have become institutionalized. Consequently, the topics of news stories neglected the life experiences of women who, as mothers and caregivers, were involved in the "processes of life and death."[85] Molotch also noted that the media reported women's issues selectively, as seen through the eyes of male reporters, editors and publishers.[86]

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[82] Carolyn Kitch, "Whose History Does Journalism Tell? Considering Women's Absence from the Story of the Century," American Journalism 18 (Winter 2001): 13-31.
[83] Ibid., 26.
[84] Harvey Molotch, "The News of Women...," 178-181.
[85] Ibid., 181-182.
[86] Ibid., 182.

Danner and Walsh also observed similar selectivity in their review of stories, cited earlier, about a national women's conference. While the conference was called to address substantive issues of human rights and the roles of women in world economical systems and political structures, the majority of the mainstream news coverage emphasized the conflict among female participants and the meeting's apparent lack of organization.[87]

Danner and Walsh examined 31 articles that ran in the *New York Times* and 29 that appeared in the *Washington Post* about the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. Only 11 *New York Times* articles and five *Washington Post* stories focused on substantive conference issues, such as poverty, education or abuse. That amounted to a scant one-fourth of all the stories the two papers ran about the conference. The vast majority of the stories centered on conflict among delegates or featured stereotypical portrayals of women. The unfortunate by-product of such coverage, Danner and Walsh concluded, was that reporters diminished the significance of the conference by emphasizing other frames, including conflict.[88] The authors noted that:

> ...(L)anguage that emphasizes women in conflict - or, women "bickering" - serves to reinforce the (mis)conception between and among women is an inherent aspect of femininity; one that inevitably keeps women from realizing their goals for achieving significant social change.[89]

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[87] Danner and Walsh, "'Radical' Feminists and 'Bickering' Women...," 72.
[88] Ibid., 76.
[89] Ibid., 72.

Writing about a subcommittee focused on women and media during the same 1995 Women's Conference, Hannah Pandian reiterated that essential point. She observed that:

> Prevailing news values still define most women and their problems as unnewsworthy and, when women are included, their portrayals are predictably sexual or confined to the private sphere of home.[90]

Lee Jolliffe pointed out that such a gendered definition of news has harmed men as well as women. Content analyses, she wrote, have revealed that news coverage has not only slighted and stereotyped women, but stereotyped men as well.[91] Jolliffe explained that men portrayed in newspapers had no physical attributes, no feelings, no home lives and no personalities.

In 1985 issues of *The New York Times*, a man's name was coupled with his job title 50 percent of the time. Jolliffe concluded that men were viewed as paychecks.[92] She further argued that men in news stories were treated as objects to be injured and killed.

> So while women appearing in the newspaper are real people, with jobs but also children, families, homes, and physical and psychological beings, men are nothing more than money and any power it conveys. No wonder it's so easy to kill them off day after day.[93]

While Jolliffe's arguments were made to support content analysis as a

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[90] Hannah Pandian, "Engendering communication Policy," Media, Culture & Society 21(1999): 459-480.
[91] Lee Jolliffe, "Yes! More Content Analyses!" Newspaper Research Journal 14 (Summer-Fall 1993): 93-97.
[92] Ibid., 97
[93] Ibid., 98.

valid method of journalistic study, her thoughts have broader applications. If women have objected to being cast as victims, men have been equally victimized when portrayed as expendable objects in newspapers. While women have objected to constantly having their physical appearances scrutinized in print, men have rarely come across with any physical attributes, which have made them seem less human.

Research has yet to uncover why females have fared so poorly as newspaper sources. A 1999 study by Douglas Blanks Hindman, Robert Littlefield, Ann Preston and Dennis Newmann, however, suggested a correlation between diverse communities and source availability. While this study did not specifically include females as minorities, the authors found that editors in ethnically pluralistic communities were more likely to include ethnic minorities in their lists of influential local people and potential sources.[94]

Following the trail: fairness and balance

Beside the definition of news, other factors have contributed to a reporter's source selection. Newsgathering practices and traditions have historically favored a reporter's reliance on routine channels of information and sources.

In terms of political reporting, W. Lance Bennett observed that studies and books supported using official or authoritative viewpoints as the building blocks

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[94] Douglas Blanks Hindman, Robert Littlefield, Ann Preston and Dennis Neumann, "Structural Pluralism, Ethnic Pluralism, and Community Newspapers," Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly 76 (Summer 1999): 250-263.

of stories. Three journalistic norms reinforced the reliance on official points of view, he argued. These were: 1) Professional virtues of objectivity and balance; 2.) Political obligations to offer democratic accountability to citizens; and, 3.) The economics of the news business.[95]

Thus, Bennett continued, the drive to get an official reaction has been duly ensconced in the practices and traditions of journalism. This trend was especially evident when journalists pursued complex stories that continued to evolve. In those stories, journalists followed the trail of official actions and pronouncements.[96]

Rich's college textbook, which was cited earlier, also instructed journalists to follow the appropriate trail. She urged journalists to go to the source and the heart of the story because information was best obtained from those in the know. Journalists, she wrote, have historically interviewed newsmakers to get first hand accounts of events and issues.[97]

Concerns for fairness and balance in reporting have also dictated whom reporters have sought out as sources. The Code of Ethics for the Society of Professional Journalists has instructed journalists to seek out all sides of a news story and give those accused of any wrongdoing a chance to respond.[98]

Fico and Cote also examined the issue of fairness and balance in their

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[95] W. Lance Bennett, "An Introduction to Journalism Norms and Representations of Politics," Political Communication 13 (Spring 1996): 373-384.
[96] Ibid., 375.
[97] Rich, Reporting and Writing the News, 46.
[98] "Code of Ethics," Quill 85, (October 1997): 1

study of reporting in the 1994 Michigan governor's race. The authors defined fairness as "the simple inclusion of the other side in stories about conflict," while balance referred to how equally various sides in a conflict were treated in relation to one another. The authors noted that fairness and balance were hard standards to achieve and only 14 percent of the 214 stories they examined were both balanced and fair. However, in an effort to determine whether both sides of an issue were explored, the authors measured space allotted to sources with differing viewpoints.[99]

The beat system influenced source selection

The beat system has also exerted control over source selection. Typically, newspaper reporters have covered key institutions such as local government, schools, hospitals, the courts and law enforcement agencies, which are called "beats." Textbook authors Donald L. Shaw, Maxwell McCombs and Gerry Keir noted that such beats were "built around established power structures and social order." As reporters went about their task of covering an assigned beat, official sources were quoted more. The authors pointed out that a reporter covering city government probably checked in with the mayor's office every day. Consequently, mayors were quoted more frequently than were those who opposed the mayor's policies.[100]

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[99] Frederick Fico and William Cote, "Fairness and Balance in Election Reporting: The 1994 Governor's Race in Michigan," Newspaper Research Journal 18 (Summer/Fall 1997): 50-63.
[100] Donald L. Shaw, Maxwell McCombs and Gerry Keir, Advanced Reporting (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press Inc., 1997), 56-59.

Elaborating further on the beat structure, the authors wrote:

> Beats also reinforce social values. The social values of a community are protected in their evolution, because the values are embedded in key institutions, and the press reinforces these values by concentrating most closely on these institutions.[101]

Stephen Lacy and David Matustik studied four Texas newspapers during a one-week period in August 1982 to determine how prevalent beat sources were. Results showed that city hall, police and education beats accounted for 84 percent of all story ideas while 85 percent of all copy originated from beat sources.

The researchers also discovered two important reporter traits that affected how beat and organizational sources were used. How much experience a reporter had, as well as how long he or she had been on a particular beat, emerged as factors. Lacy and Matustik theorized that more experienced reporters were better able to develop their own story ideas without help from sources on their beat. Reporters who were on a beat for some length of time sometimes assimilated the values of their beat sources, the authors pointed out, and developed ideas similar to those articulated by their sources.[102]

Reporter experience also emerged as a factor in source selection in a 1982 study by John Dimmick and Philip Coit. They noted that the more experienced a reporter was, the more autonomous he or she was. An autonomous reporter was more capable of seeking out sources and working

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[101] Ibid., 57.

[102] Stephen Lacy and David Matustik, "Dependence on Organization and Beat Sources for Story Ideas: A Case Study of Four Newspapers," Newspaper Research Journal 5 (Winter 1984): 9-17.

without direction from editors. More experienced reporters were also in better positions to challenge official sources and find other venues for obtaining information.[103]

Fico measured factors affecting source selection in his survey of reporters who covered the Indiana and Michigan statehouses from 1982 to 1983. He discovered that source selection could be influenced by the perceptions reporters had regarding the concerns of their editors. In Indiana, reporters were more likely to use a diverse array of sources if they believed their editors were concerned with stories that stressed interpretation, audience understanding and research.

In Michigan, the results were just the opposite. Michigan reporters depended less on source diversity if they sensed the same editorial concerns regarding interpretation, audience understanding and research.[104] Fico suggested that some of the disparity in the results could be attributed to the different institutional settings that Indiana and Michigan reporters labored in. Indiana's legislature was only in session part time while the Michigan legislature met full time.

Continuing his research on factors governing source selection, Fico reviewed 270 stories written about the Michigan statehouse during a 12-day period in 1984. His sample included six newspapers with capitol bureaus and two

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[103] John Dimmick and Philip Coit, "Levels of Analysis in Mass Media Decision Making," Communication Research 9 (January 1982): 3-32.

[104] Frederick Fico, "Influence of Perceived Editorial Concern and Role Concept on Source Reliance," Journalism Quarterly (date): 322-331.

wire services. Based on the number and types of sources quoted, Fico reached these conclusions:

- Medium type, with associated deadlines and technical constraints, exerted a major constraint on source selection. Wire service reporters, for instance, faced especially tight space and deadline pressures. Because they wrote for a statewide audience, quoting widely recognizable official sources actually conserved journalistic resources. Wire service reporters also used fewer sources, primarily because of job constraints.
- Reporters who covered more than one beat from the newsroom were obviously spread more thinly. Consequently, they were not able to develop the network of sources available to those who covered just one beat. Instead, these reporters relied more on regularly scheduled activities for access to sources. They also did less interviewing that required more time, preparation and effort.
- Reporters with offices in the statehouse had an advantage over journalists who covered the legislature from newsrooms. Being located geographically close to sources made it easier to cultivate relationships and obtain information.
- The kinds of institutions reporters covered limited their access to sources, since even similar institutions such as statehouses had different routines. Because lawmakers served only part time in the

> Indiana legislature, that institution had vastly different routines than the full-time Michigan statehouse did. Consequently, reporters who covered the part-time legislature had different work processes than did reporters in Michigan.[105]

Overall, research during the 1970s and 1980s suggested that the traditional approach to covering news based on bureaucratic beats, such as police, city hall and state government, actually led reporters to rely on officials as news sources. Would that be the case, however, if topical beats, such as the environment, were studied?

Stephen Lacy and David C. Coulson examined how six major metropolitan daily newspapers covered motor vehicle emissions standards during 1995. The six dailies served cities, such as Los Angeles, New York City and Washington, plagued by some of the worst air pollution problems in the country. In addition, all six newspapers had the financial resources to assign specialty reporters to environmental topics.[106]

While motor vehicle emissions standards directly affected consumers and the topic readily lent itself to testimony from environmental experts, the authors found that of all the sources used in stories from all six papers, 43 percent were government sources. Thirty-nine percent of the sources were from the ranks of

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[105] Frederick Fico, "Replication of Findings in Newspaper and Wire Service Source Use in Statehouse Coverage," Newspaper Research Journal 7 (Winter 1985): 45-51.

[106] Stephen Lacy and David C. Coulson, "Comparative Case Study - Newspaper Source Use on the Environmental Beat," Newspaper Research Journal 21 (Winter 2000): 13-25

business, while just five percent were consumers and four percent were environmentalists. Only two percent of the sources were scientists.[107]

Lacy and Coulson concluded that:

> (O)bvious limited selection is practiced when government and business sources are used four and a half times more often than all other sources combined. Consumers and environmentalists made up only nine percent of the sources.[108]

Reliance on government and business sources when covering the story of motor vehicle emissions meant people within these ranks had a greater opportunity to influence public policy on the topic, the authors observed.[109] Unfortunately, sources entrenched in government and business also had their own agendas and slants on the issue, which may not have coincided with what was in the best interests of either consumers or the environment.

Meeting deadlines also affected source selection. In fact, Marc Cooper and Lawrence C. Soley reported that as deadlines approached, source availability became crucial. Journalists sought to find a source they could quote within the available time frame. The source may not have been the best person available or even the journalist's first preference, but time pressures forced journalists to compromise on source selection.[110]

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[107] Ibid., 18
[108] Ibid., 18.
[109] Ibid., 19.
[110] Marc Cooper and Lawrence C. Soley, " All the Right Sources," Mother Jones (February-March 1990): 20-27.

The mindset of reporters

Complaints that journalists have been biased are frequently heard. Some have charged that reporters allowed their own prejudices to affect their reporting.

S. Holly Stocking and Nancy LaMarca addressed this concern in interviews with 11 midwestern reporters in 1988. Borrowing from cognitive psychology, the researchers explored "confirmation bias," or whether reporters gathered and selected information that confirmed their beliefs about people and events.

Stocking and LaMarca asked reporters to describe stories they wrote. Specifically, they wanted journalists to explain what the story was about and how the story originated. They discovered that at least some assumptions about the people, organizations, events and phenomena the reporters covered emerged with all the descriptions.[111] Stocking and LaMarca pointed out, though, that only rarely were entire stories based on what they considered "porous assumptions." Occasionally they felt a reporter embraced a belief and built a story around that belief "without any apparent intention of formally testing the belief."[112]

The mindset of a reporter was an important consideration in a study of journalism students by Dan G. Drew and Susan H. Miller. The researchers

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[111] S. Holly Stocking and Nancy LaMarca, "How Journalists Describe Their Stories," Journalism Quarterly 67 (Summer 1990): 295-301.
[112] Ibid., 299.

examined whether stereotyped images of females influenced student reporters as they gathered and reported information about women in newspapers.[113]

In their 1997 study, students received fictional information about a new school superintendent. In half the cases, the superintendent was male and in the other half, the superintendent was female. Students wrote a story based on that information, then prepared questions to ask the superintendent at a press conference. Drew and Miller found that when the superintendent was male, stories were more likely to include qualifications of the fictitious newsmaker. In preparing questions, student reporters typically quizzed the female superintendent about sex roles and the job. Questions centered on how she balanced family and career. The female source also drew more factual questions about the job as students probed responsibilities of the job and possible limitations of the new superintendent.[114]

Effects of conflict and proximity

Berkowitz and Beach's content analysis of three Iowa daily newspapers explored the effects of the news values conflict and proximity in source selection. They concluded that when journalists covered stories within their own geographic communities, they developed a more diverse source pool. Reporters commonly sought out unaffiliated sources and wove them into their

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[113] Dan G. Drew and Susan H. Miller, "Sex Stereotyping and Reporting," Journalism Quarterly 54 (1997): 142-146.
[114] Ibid., 144.

stories in those cases. However, journalists reporting on stories in communities they were less familiar with typically relied on official sources. In formulating their hypotheses, the researchers speculated that conflict news, or stories that involved varying opinions on controversial issues, would yield a more diverse source mix. Once results were tabulated however, the authors discovered that only proximate stories yielded a wider range of sources.[115]

The correlation between source diversity and the proximity of news stories was also established by Shannon Martin Rossi's study. Of the news organizations she observed, those physically closest to the news event offered readers the fullest range of sources.[116]

Finally, in a 1994 study, Angela Powers and Fico compiled results from surveys of 121 journalists who covered government, business or law enforcement hard news stories. All reporters in the survey worked for the top 21 circulation papers listed in *Editor & Publisher*. Power and Fico used frequency distributions to determine the most and least influential factors on source usage. Source credibility, source accessibility and time pressures were the three most influential variables, according to journalists surveyed. Ninety-six percent of the respondents indicated source credibility was often or always influential regarding source usage. Sixty-two percent rated source accessibility as often or always

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[115] Berkowitz and Beach, "News Sources and News Context," 512.
[116] Shannon Martin Rossi, "Proximity of Event as a Factor in Selection of News Sources," Journalism Quarterly 65 (Winter 1998): 986-989.

influential and 51 percent indicated time pressure was often or always influential.[117]

The three least influential variables included pressure from advertising departments, source gender and newspaper policy on political issues. Ninety-nine percent of journalists said pressure from the advertising department was seldom or never influential; 93 percent indicated source gender was seldom or never influential; and 93 percent indicated newspaper policy on political issues was seldom or never influential.[118]

Problems of ignoring women as sources

As this literature review has revealed, source selection has depended on several factors. The very definition of news even had an effect on who reporters quoted and paraphrased in their stories. Source selection has also bowed to the constraints of the newsgathering process and of the medium itself.

According to the studies cited in this review, news sources have typically been male, typically official and typically represented either government or business institutions. Average citizens rarely found their way into news stories unless they were victims of a tragedy or an event. Women have appeared in very traditional or stereotypical roles or have been ignored all together in newspapers.

Should readers be concerned about this? The answer should be "yes" for

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[117] Angela Powers and Frederick Fico, "Influences on Use of Sources at Large U.S. Newspapers," Newspaper Research Journal 15 (Fall 1994): 87-97.

[118] Ibid., 92

a variety of reasons.

Sigal, who's work set the standards for determining how news originated, noted that who made it into the news actually affected who governed and who opposed.[119] If women have been excluded from the news, their opportunities to govern and even engage in public debate have been severely limited. As a democracy, it should concern everyone that segments of society have been excluded from participating equally in the democratic process.

The fact that newspaper readers have not been exposed to the opinions and achievements of women should be equally distressing. As Lasorsa and Reese noted earlier in this literature review, sources definitely shaped how a story was presented. Emphasizing one point of view kept other points of view obscured from readers.[120] If readers learned about important events through the comments of male sources, how fair have news stories really been?

In fact, some researchers have called the very definition of news into question. Rakow and Kranich were cited earlier in this review explaining how news favored males and male institutions because the definition of news reflected more male-oriented attributes. News has reflected the more masculine norms of conflict and individual triumph, the authors pointed out, rather than more feminine attributes of teamwork and cooperation.[121]

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[119] Sigal, Reporters and Officials, 63.

[120] Lasorsa and Reese, "News Source Use in Crash of 1987," 60-71.

[121] Lana Rakow and Kimberlie Kranich, "Women as Sign in Television News," Journal of Communication 41 (Winter 1991): 8-23.

In her 1988 book *Eloquence in the Electronic Age*, Kathleen Hall Jamieson noted that colonial American society took great pains to make sure women were seen and not heard. A woman who was a "scold" or a "nag" would be bound to a stool and submerged in water until she was almost drowned. Gasping for breath, the woman was pulled out of the water and offered the chance to "renounce her verbal past."[122] Women in those days were literally forced to choose between death and speaking out. Being silent and submissive were survival tactics then.

Today, more subtle methods have evolved to keep women quiet. Rather than dunk women in water, the voices of women have not been allowed to flourish. The media have either ignored them completely or reduced them to traditional, stereotypical roles. Rather than physical annihilation, women have indeed been symbolically annihilated in the media for centuries.

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[122] Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Eloquence in the Electronic Age, (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1988), 67.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To Determine Gender and Source Affiliation in Two Daily Newspapers

Scholarly research has continually confirmed a common fact: women, whether they were called sources or subjects, have been notably absent from the pages of newspapers. Prestige papers and local papers alike have included more male sources in practically all stories, regardless of topic.

Research has also focused on the use of official, or elite, sources and study after study has confirmed that news stories have been liberally peppered with elite, especially governmental, sources.

Scholars have suggested that these two trends have removed a vital voice from the news - that of women. Females have been associated with accepted images of women rather than quoted as experts or officials with valuable information to impart.

Studies have also indicated that the closer to home a news story was, the more likely reporters were to cast wider news nets that captured a multitude of sources.

The purpose of this study was to determine how often females were used as sources in the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Des Moines Register* in stories that dealt with different types of news events and issues. A key difference in this study, however, was that most of the newspaper sections were examined during a constructed week sample to get a fuller picture of source and gender. Only the sports pages were omitted. This study also examined the image of female sources based on their affiliation and the role they played in locally written news stories. To that end, four research questions were explored:

R1: Did stories with bylines from staff writers use more male than female sources?

R2: Were male sources used more frequently than female sources in stories that dealt with crime, government and business?

R3: Were female sources used more frequently than male sources in stories that dealt with education, health and lifestyle-leisure topics such as hobbies, activities and family issues?

R4: Did female sources occupy lower status occupations based on their affiliation with organizations and entities?

Research also suggested that female reporters quoted slightly more female sources than male reporters did. Most studies, however, noted that

female reporters still quoted more males overall. A final research question addressed that issue.

R5: Did female reporters quote more female sources over male sources than did their male counterparts?

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN

Overall Description, Definition of Source, Coding Information

Overall description

Newspaper selection

Two daily newspapers, the *Omaha World Herald* and the *Des Moines Register*, were selected for this study. Several studies have examined prestige newspapers, which have been defined as papers with sufficient resources to hire and maintain quality staffers and papers that have consistently met high ethical and journalistic standards.[123]

Most readers, however, do not regularly read papers such as the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New York Times*. Instead, readers typically read papers

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[123] Stephen Lacy, Frederick Fico, and Todd F. Simon, "Fairness and Balance in the Prestige Press," Journalism Quarterly 68 (Fall 1991): 363-370.

printed in their cities and states. Both the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Des Moines Register* had wide market penetrations within their states, especially when compared to other dailies in the United States. Further, like the prestige papers, both newspapers had the financial resources to hire staff members and support thriving newsrooms.

The second reason to use these large dailies was to enhance the research on the topic. Because some studies on gender and sources have used prestige papers, perhaps researchers have gotten an incomplete picture. Would two mid-Western dailies mimic the prestige papers in terms of relying on more male sources?

Studying large metropolitan dailies has been done before. The 1982 study by Davis cited in the literature review studied four metropolitan papers in Oklahoma.[124] Berkowitz and Beach used the *Des Moines Register* in their 1993 study of how proximity and conflict affected source selection.[125]

Sample week

This study looked at a constructed week in 2000 that began on Monday, February 21. This author randomly selected the day of the week - Monday - and then the month to begin the study - February. The actual start date was selected by randomly choosing a date from a list of Mondays in February. Newspapers

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[124] Davis, "Sexist Bias in Eight Newspapers...," 456-460.
[125] Dan Berkowitz and Douglas Beach, "News Sources and News Context: the Effect of Routine News, conflict and Proximity." Journalism Quarterly 70 (Spring 1993): 4-12.

from Monday, February 21; Tuesday, February 29; Wednesday, March 8; Thursday, March 16; Friday, March 24; Saturday, April 1 and Sunday, April 9, comprised this study. Davis employed a similar methodology. She constructed her week to include newspapers published just in October 1979, with each day of the week represented by a paper published within that time frame.[126]

Obviously, neither this study nor the Davis study utilized a randomly constructed week sample, which Daniel Riffe, Charles Aust and Stephen Lacy described in their 1993 study exploring the effectiveness of constructed day and consecutive week samples.[127] By sampling specific days of the week from different weeks, researchers have used constructed week samples to compensate for daily variances in the amount of space available for news. Sunday newspapers, for example, have routinely had larger news holes to fill than weekday newspapers have had.[128] In fact, many studies omitted Sunday papers specifically because of the large news hole or excluded Saturdays because the news hole was so small. Studies have also avoided sampling two Sunday or two Saturday newspapers when determining the constructed week.

However, this study specifically included weekend newspapers to see how existing news holes were filled. The size of the news holes and the days of the

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[126] Davis, "Sexist Bias in Eight Newspapers..," 456.

[127] Daniel Riffe, Charles Aust and Stephen Lacy, "The Effectiveness of Random, Consecutive Day and Constructed Week Sampling in Newspaper Content Analysis," Journalism Quarterly 70 (Spring 1993):133-139.

[128] Ibid., 134.

week were secondary to determining how sources were used in the stories that filled the existing news holes.

Randomly constructed weeks have also compensated for the effect that on-going stories, such as disasters or especially vivid crimes, have had on the sample. If an Omaha snowstorm paralyzed the city, for instance, story after story about that event would have filled the pages of the paper during a consecutive week sampling period. The results would then have been skewed because one event received most of the coverage. This study accounted for that by constructing a week that began in February and ended in April. During that time period, no overriding event or story garnered enough continuous coverage to present a lopsided view of source usage.

This study involved a convenience or purposive sample. Daniel Riffe and Alan Freitag noted in a 1997 examination of content analysis that 77. 8 percent of the content analyses in a popular research journal used convenience or purposive samples. "Non-random samples are often desirable - even necessary - for logistics or conceptual reasons specific to a particular study," they reported.[129] The authors cautioned, however, against making sweeping judgments based on these samples. This study was designed to determine how gender figured into the overall source equation at two large daily newspapers.

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[129] Daniel Riffe and Alan Freitag, "A Content Analysis of Content Analyses: Twenty-five Years of Journalism Quarterly," Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 74 (Autumn 1997): 515-524.

Rather than make vast predictions, this study instead explored source and gender issues in the first year of the 21st Century.

Bylined articles

Only stories with bylines by reporters who worked for either the *Herald* or the *Register* were included in this study, which yielded a total of 149 stories from the *World-Herald* and 132 stories from the *Des Moines Register* for a sample size of 281 stories. Since research has consistently shown that reporters have more opportunities for finding sources in their own backyards, this study excluded articles from wire services or other newspapers. The 1999 study by Danner and Walsh cited in the literature review also used articles written by local reporters.[130]

This study examined all bylined articles that appeared in the front-page sections, the metro sections, the living sections and the business sections of the *Herald* and the *Register.* Stories that appeared in the sports pages were excluded from the study. Reporting about sports has developed into a specialty, which has typically differed from news reporting. Opinion columns and editorials were also excluded, as were book, movie and play reviews since such articles reflected opinion and little reliance on sources. Any advice or recipe columns were also excluded, again because sources typically were not used.

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[130] Lauren Danner and Susan Walsh, "'Radical' Feminists and 'Bickering' Women," Critical Studies in Mass Media 16 (1999): 63-84.

Since the major news sections of the two newspapers were studied, this study was designed to yield a more accurate picture of how local newspapers used sources in a variety of stories. Past studies have either focused exclusively on just front-page stories or even business stories. Readers, however, have the opportunity to read more than just a front page, so focusing exclusively on one section of a newspaper seemed too narrow.

To address the research questions that measured whether type of story affected source selection, stories were divided into seven topical categories: 1.) Health, which included medical and research-oriented stories; 2.) Government, which included stories featuring courts, local or state government or the effect of national policies on local citizens; 3.) Lifestyle/Leisure, which included stories about parenting and family, as well as cultural and entertainment activities; 4.) Education, which featured articles about elementary through college institutions and topical issues such as literacy; 5.) Business, which encompassed articles about local businesses, industries or consumer issues; 6.) Crime/Accident/Safety, which included stories about local or statewide crimes or safety issues; and 7.) Other, which included stories about the weather as well as obituaries written by local reporters. These obituaries typified the traditional idea of an obituary in that the story focused on the life of the deceased and quoted relatives or friends. Paid funeral announcements detailing service arrangements and next of kin were not included because sources were not used in these announcements.

Grouping stories by category has been common in content analysis of news coverage. A study by W. James Potter employed five categories for coding story type,[131] while other studies have divided stories into broad, topical categories. Past studies have used a category devoted to government, one devoted to crime, one for education and another for business-related stories. Lifestyle and health categories have also been common categories. The groupings were modified somewhat and arranged stories into the seven categories mentioned earlier for this study.

Definition of a source

Stephen Lacy and David C. Coulson defined a source as "an identifiable person or group that had a statement or information attributed to it."[132] Their definition was used in this study. Sources either had direct quotes or paraphrased information attributed to them under the Lacy and Coulson definition.

It was not difficult to note the gender of most sources in this study. Sources with names such as "Pat" that could either be feminine or masculine were usually referred to by pronoun later in a story. A handful of stories included a quotation or comment from sources not identified by name. Sometimes a source was described as a police official, for instance. If it was impossible to

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[131] W. James Potter, "Gender Representation in Elite Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly 62 (1985) 636-640.

[132] Stephen Lacy and David Coulson, "Newspaper Source Use on the Environmental Beat," Newspaper Research Journal 21 (Winter 2000): 13-25.

ascertain the gender of the unidentified source based on follow-up pronouns or the context of the story, that source was excluded from the study. However, the story itself was not excluded, only the source that could not be identified by gender was eliminated.

It was more time-consuming to determine the gender of the reporters based solely on bylines. If a reporter's name could be either masculine or feminine, the spelling of the name was considered. If that was not sufficient, telephone calls were placed to the newspapers. In some cases, recorded messages on the telephone indicated the gender of the reporter. In other cases, news editors indicated the gender of the reporter.

However, to answer the final research question regarding whether female reporters quoted more female sources, the sample size was reduced. In some cases, stories were written by a male and female reporter combination. These stories with dual bylines were not omitted from the entire study but were excluded when it came to studying stories written by male and female reporters to determine whether a correlation existed between reporter gender and source gender.

This study also considered the status of sources and ranked sources according to levels of importance used in 1987 by Delano Brown et al. [133] and Berkowitz.[134] These authors used six categories to determine the status of

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[133] Delano Brown et al. "Invisible Power...," 48.
[134] Dan Berkowitz, "TV News Sources and News Channels: A Study in Agenda Building," Journalism Quarterly 64 (1987): 508-513.

sources: 1.) Executive - those in management or decision-making positions; 2.) Professional - people with degrees who worked as doctors, lawyers, teachers, scientists; 3.) Spokesperson – people who spoke for an organization; 4.) Worker - people employed as secretaries, factory workers, store clerks and technicians; 5.) Position not specified – people not identified by position but associated with a named organization or entity; and 6.) Unaffiliated - sources who were quoted because they were relatives, other than parents, of other sources or related to victims or subjects of stories.[135]

To determine whether a source occupied an executive position, both job title and job duties were considered. Sources whose job titles included words such as "president," " vice president" and "chief executive officer" were considered executives. Judges and those occupying elective or appointed offices were also considered executives. Sources with decision-making capability or who were in a position to exert influence over others were grouped into the Executive category as well. A school principal, for example, was considered an "executive" because he or she had decision-making capability. The same idea applied to police captains and sheriffs as well as members of the clergy who held positions of authority such as bishops or cardinals.

The major criteria for grouping sources into the Professional category was whether a source's job required professional schooling, a professional license and/or advanced training. Doctors, dentists and attorneys were grouped

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[135] Ibid., 7-8.

into the professional category, as were nurses, professors, sociologists, teachers and members of the clergy. If a physician was head of a university department or hospital, however, he or she was considered an executive because of the decision-making capabilities of his or her job. Similarly, a district attorney was considered an executive because of the nature of the job, while an attorney in private practice was coded as a professional in this study.

The Unaffiliated category was reserved for sources quoted because they were related to or somehow knew other sources in a given news story. For instance, the sister, spouse or friend of a crime victim was grouped in the Unaffiliated category.

This author created three additional categories to determine source status. They included: 1.) Parent - people identified in a news story as a mother, father or stepparent without any other affiliation; 2.) Student - sources who appeared because they were enrolled in some type of learning institution or completing some field of study; and 3.) Prisoners - sources incarcerated in prisons or jails, either waiting for a trial or who had been convicted and were serving their sentences.

Coding information

The 281 articles from the *World-Herald* and the *Des Moines Register* were coded to answer the research questions. For each story, reporter gender was noted. The number of male and female sources used in each story was also

coded, as was the status of each source. The nine categories described earlier were used to determine source status. Each story was also coded to reflect the type of story utilizing the seven categories listed earlier. This author was the only one coding the information.

This was a quantitative study regarding sources and gender with a qualitative description of individual news stories. Statistical analyses were not performed. In a similar approach to a study about sources and motor vehicles emissions, Lacy and Coulson concluded that because theirs was not a probability sample, "tests of statistical significance were not used."[136] Other studies devoted to source and gender excluded statistical analyses as well.

[136] Lacy and Coulson, "Comparative Case Study...," 18.

CHAPTER 3

Results and Findings

Women Were Ignored

Results and Findings - Overview

A total of 281stories was included in this study. From the *Omaha World-Herald*, 149 stories were analyzed. Four stories from the *World-Herald* were excluded because only documents and court records were used as sources. From the *Des Moines Register*, 132 stories were reviewed. Three stories were excluded from that paper because only documentary sources were used. Most of the 877 sources quoted or paraphrased in the two newspapers were males. As indicated in table 1, females accounted for just 27 percent of the sources. Males comprised 73 percent of the source pool. In other words, males appeared as sources almost three times as often as females appeared.

Table 1
Number of female and male sources used in stories from both papers.

	Female sources	Male sources	Total sources
World-Herald & Register	240 (27%)	637 (73%)	877

Stories were divided into seven topical categories: Crime, Government, Business, Health, Lifestyle-Leisure, Education and Other. Only stories from the *World-Herald* fell into the Other category and included 11 stories that were either obituaries or reports about weather trends.

In terms of the gender of sources based on the category of the story, male sources outnumbered female sources by almost three to one in the Crime, Government and Business categories in both newspapers (table 2). In the softer news categories, the disparity between the number of male and female sources was not as great. In the Education, Health, Lifestyle-Leisure and Other categories, 39 percent of the sources were females, while 61 percent of the sources were males.

Interestingly enough, however, when looking at the use of sources in hard and soft categories (table 2), female sources were quoted at about the same rate in the Crime, Government, and Business sources as they were in the Education, Health, Lifestyle and Other categories. Male sources, however, were quoted far more frequently in the hard news category, with 464 male sources appearing in

crime, government and business-related stories while only 173 males were quoted in the softer news stories.

Table 2
Number of female and male sources by story category from both papers.

	Female sources	Male sources	Total sources
Crime, Government, Business	130 (22%)	464 (78%)	594
Education, Health, Lifestyle, Other	110 (39%)	173 (61%)	283

In terms of the status of male and female sources, males consistently occupied higher status levels in stories from both the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Des Moines Register*. Of the 597 sources grouped into the two highest status levels - Executive and Professional - only 17 percent were females compared to 83 percent who were males.

Actually, an overwhelming majority of the sources from both newspapers fell into the Executive and Professional categories. Of the 877 sources quoted or paraphrased in the 281 stories, 68 percent were coded as executives or professionals.

Females appeared more frequently than males did in just two status levels - Unaffiliated and Parent. Spouses, siblings, other relatives and friends were grouped into the Unaffiliated category and females accounted for 59 percent of

the sources in that category. Sixty-seven percent of the sources in the Parent category were females.

When source selection was viewed in terms of reporter gender, this research found that male and female reporters both quoted and paraphrased more males.

As indicated in table 3, 32 percent of the sources cited by female reporters from both newspapers were females while 68 percent of the sources were males. Male reporters quoted or paraphrased even fewer females. In examining the source pool in stories by male reporters, just 24 percent of the sources were females compared to the 76 percent who were males.

Table 3
Sources quoted based on reporter gender from both papers.

	Female sources	Male sources	Total
Female reporters	109 (32%)	227 (68%)	336
Male reporters	121 (24%)	382 (76%)	503

Research Questions Explored

Research Question 1 - Did stories with bylines from staff writers use more male than female sources?

Research Question 1 explored whether articles written by reporters from the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Des Moines Register* quoted and paraphrased

more male sources. Past studies have revealed that males have been used as sources more frequently than females in American newspapers.

This study found the same pattern, so the first research question was answered affirmatively. Males were indeed used as sources more than females were. A total of 877 sources was quoted or paraphrased in the 281 stories included in the study. Twenty-seven percent, or 240 females, were used as sources. On the other hand, 73 percent of the sources, or 637, were males. Males were almost three times as likely to be used as sources in the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Des Moines Register.*

This finding paralleled what Zock and VanSlyke Turk discovered in their analysis of front-page stories between 1986 and 1996. In their study, 68 percent of the sources were males while only 20 percent were females.[137] In this study, the percentages were slightly higher and 73 percent of the sources were males while 27 percent were females.

This finding also illustrated the theme of symbolic annihilation set forth by Tuchman et al.[138] While Tuchman et al. were writing about studies collected during a 1975 conference, the passage of time has not helped women gain visibility. This study explored newspapers during 2000, yet the dawning of the new millennium showed women were still symbolically annihilated in two mid-Western daily newspapers.

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[137] Zoch and VanSlyke Turk, "Women Making News...," 762-775.
[138] Tuchman, Home & Hearth, 8.

The percentages of female versus male sources used in each paper were almost equal (table 4). Females accounted for 25 percent of the sources in *Herald* stories while males accounted for 75 percent of the sources. Females constituted 30 percent of the sources used in *Register* stories while males accounted for 70 percent. Despite the slight differences in percentages, both newspapers clearly relied on more male sources.

Table 4
Female and male sources used in each paper.

	Female sources	Male sources	Total sources
World-Herald	115 (25%)	344 (75%)	459
Register	125 (30%)	293 (70%)	418
Totals for both papers	240 (27%)	637 (73%)	877

Research Question 2 - Were male sources used more frequently than female sources in stories that dealt with crime, government and business?

Content analyses have consistently broken stories into categories based on the type of story. Since topics such as crime, government and business have typically been considered hard news, this research question explored whether males were quoted and paraphrased more than females were.

This study indicated more men were indeed used as sources in these three categories, so this question was answered affirmatively as well. Eighty-five stories from the *Register* and 98 stories from the *Herald* fit into the Crime,

Government and Business categories for a total of 183 stories. Of the 594 sources quoted in these stories, 464 sources, or 78 percent, were males, compared to the 130 sources, or 22 percent, who were females (table 5). Men were favored as sources in crime, government and business stories by almost a four-to-one ratio.

Table 5
Number of female and male sources by story category in both papers.

	Female sources	Male sources	Total sources
Crime	38 (25%)	112 (75%)	150
Government	70 (20%)	277 (80%)	347
Business	22 (23%)	75 (77%)	97
Totals	130 (22%)	464 (78%)	594

Women were most notably absent as sources in the Government category. Stories in this category delved into public policy issues, explored how readers were affected by laws or policy decisions and reported on local government as well as state legislative sessions and actions. Considering both papers together, 347 sources were quoted in the three categories. Just 70 females were quoted in government stories, compared to the 277 males who were quoted or paraphrased. In other words, females accounted for just 20 percent of the source pool in government stories compared to the 80 percent who were males.

In the Crime and Business categories, male sources also outnumbered female sources, although not as overwhelmingly. In the Crime category from both papers, 38 females were cited, representing 25 percent of the source pool. However, 112 males appeared as sources in crime stories from both newspapers and accounted for 75 percent of the sources.

The percentages were similar for business stories. Just 22 females, or 23 percent, appeared as sources in business stories that ran in the *Des Moines Register* and the *Omaha World-Herald*. Seventy-five males were quoted in business stories and accounted for 77 percent of the sources from both newspapers.

As indicated in table 6, more males were used as sources by each newspaper in all three categories. In the Crime category, the *World-Herald* used fewer sources and fewer stories fell into that category. In the Government and Business categories, however, the *World-Herald* used more sources and more stories were included in that category.

Male sources dominated the Government category in both newspapers, with 176 males quoted in *World-Herald* stories and 101 males quoted in *Register* articles. Female sources, on the other hand, were more evenly distributed among the three story categories, although more females were used as sources in government-related stories, thus mimicking the pattern observed for male sources in these two newspapers.

Table 6
Breakdown of sources by newspaper and gender in Crime, Government and Business categories.

	World-Herald			*Register*		
	Female sources	**Male sources**	**Total sources**	**Female sources**	**Male sources**	**Total sources**
Crime	14 (27%)	37 (73%)	51	24 (24%)	75 (76%)	99
Government	36 (17%)	176 (83%)	212	34 (25%)	101 (75%)	135
Business	12 (19%)	50 (81%)	62	10 (29%)	25 (71%)	35
Totals	62 (19%)	263 (81%)	325	68 (25%)	201(75%)	269

Research Question 3 - Were female sources used more frequently than male sources in stories that dealt with education, health and lifestyle-leisure topics such as hobbies, activities and family issues?

Past research has indicated that news has been separated into hard and soft categories, with hard news devoted to timely government and public policy issues and soft news devoted to articles that have not been as timely and appealed more to the emotions. Research has also indicated that females have typically been quoted as sources in stories with a softer focus. Danner and Walsh even suggested that when women were the primary sources in hard news events, journalists tended to focus on less newsworthy attributes of the event, such as whether the women reached a consensus in terms of policy decisions.[139]

[139] Danner and Walsh, "'Radical' Feminists and 'Bickering' Women...," 72.

In this study, however, female sources were not used more than males in the softer news categories, except in the *Omaha World-Herald's* Lifestyle-Leisure category, so this research question produced a negative answer.

A total of 97 stories were reviewed in this portion of the study. Forty-seven stories from the *Herald* were examined, including 11 obituaries and weather-related stories grouped into the Other category. Fifty stories from the *Register* were studied. There were no staff-written obituaries or weather-related stories from the *Register* to include in the Other category. Overall, more males were used in these soft news categories; however, the disparity between the sexes was not as overwhelming. In the Health category alone, nearly equal numbers of male and female sources were used.

Of the 283 sources quoted or paraphrased in the soft news categories, 110 sources, or 39 percent, were females compared to the 173 males who accounted for 61 percent of the source pool (table 7).

These results indicated that women had a better chance of serving as sources in stories with a softer focus, once again illustrating the symbolic annihilation of women as females were relegated to traditional roles. Tuchman et al. observed that women who appeared on the pages of newspapers typically appeared in softer news stories with a more emotional appeal.[140] This research revealed the same pattern today as female sources came close to equaling male sources only in the softer news stories.

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[140] Tuchman, Hearth & Home..., 8.

Table 7
Number of female and male sources by category in both papers.

	Female sources	Male sources	Total sources
Education	48 (33%)	99 (67%)	147
Health	21 (49%)	22 (51%)	43
Lifestyle	35 (45%)	43 (55%)	78
Other	6 (40%)	9 (60%)	15
Totals	110 (39%)	173 (61%)	283

In the Lifestyle-Leisure category, just eight more males were used as sources. In fact, females actually outnumbered male sources in the five stories from the *World-Herald* that comprised the Lifestyle-Leisure category. Seven female sources were quoted or paraphrased in *World-Herald* stories compared to four male sources (table 8). Stories from the *World-Herald* in the Lifestyle-Leisure category explored primarily family issues, such as parenting and adoption, and hobbies.

In examining the distribution of sources in the four soft news categories, male sources clearly dominated in education-related stories with 99 males quoted in the two newspapers. Usage of males as sources dropped off considerably in the remaining categories. Female sources, however, appeared more evenly distributed among the categories. While more females were quoted in education stories, they were not concentrated as heavily in this category as the male sources were.

Table 8
Breakdown of sources by paper in Education, Health, Lifestyle and Other categories.

	World-Herald			*Register*		
	Female sources	**Male sources**	**Total sources**	**Female sources**	**Male sources**	**Total sources**
Education	32 (35%)	59 (65%)	91	16 (29%)	40 (71%)	56
Health	8 (47%)	9 (53%)	17	13 (50%)	13 (50%)	26
Lifestyle	7 (64%)	4 (36%)	11	28 (42%)	39 (58%)	67
Other	6 (40%)	9 (60%)	15			
Totals	53 (40%)	81(60%)	134	57 (38%)	92 (62%)	149

Twenty-six stories from the *Des Moines Register* fell into the Lifestyle-Leisure category and, while more male sources were used, the percentages were fairly close. Twenty-eight female sources, or 42 percent, were quoted or paraphrased compared to 39 males, or 58 percent, of the source pool. The *Register*, however, covered additional topics besides parenting and family issues in their lifestyle-leisure stories. Stories in the *Register* also dealt with museums, art collections and cultural institutions.

In the Health category, stories focused on fitness issues or the management of medical conditions and males and females approached nearly equal footing. In the seven *World-Herald* stories that fell into this category, eight females were quoted compared to nine males. Females accounted for 47 percent of the source pool, while males comprised 53 percent in the Omaha

paper. In the *Des Moines Register*, however, female and male sources were used equally. Thirteen females and 13 males were used as sources in the six stories in that category.

In the 42 stories from both papers that fell into the Education category, the ratio of male to female sources reflected the pattern in Crime, Business and Government categories. Of the 91 sources quoted or paraphrased in the *Herald's* 24 education stories, 32, or 35 percent, were females compared to 59 males, or 65 percent. A greater disparity was seen in the *Register's* 19 Education stories. Females appeared as sources 16 times, representing 29 percent of the source pool compared to the 40 males, who represented 71 percent of the sources.

Research Question 4 - Did female sources occupy lower status occupations based on their affiliation with organizations and entities?

Several studies have examined the status of news sources by noting a source's affiliation as indicated in a story. This study used nine status rankings. Six rankings - Executive, Professional, Spokesperson, Worker, Position not specified; and Unaffiliated - were used in studies by Delano Brown et al.[141] and Berkowitz.[142] Three rankings were added for this study: Parent; Student; and Prisoner.

This research question was answered affirmatively. As indicated in table

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[141] Delano Brown et al. "Invisible Power...," 48.

[142] Berkowtiz, "TV News Sources...,"508-13.

Professional. In fact, over half of the sources, or 451 sources, fell into the Executive category. Only 66, or a mere 15 percent, of those sources were females compared to the 385 males who accounted for 85 percent of the sources in the Executive category.

In the Professional category, which was the second highest status ranking, 146 sources had affiliations that put them into that category. Just 25 percent were females compared to the 75 percent who were males.

This preponderance of high-ranking sources reflected the results of other studies. A study of newspapers in 1979 and 1980 by Delano Brown et al. noted that stories were laden with sources in executive positions.[143]

On the other end of the spectrum, sources described as Unaffiliated included people who were relatives or friends of someone in a story. A separate category - Parent - was created for sources who were identified solely as a mother, father or stepparent in newspaper stories. Only in these Unaffiliated and Parent categories were more female sources quoted than male sources. Of the 56 sources considered in the Unaffiliated category, 33 sources, or 59 percent, were females. Twenty-three male sources, or 41 percent, were grouped in the Unaffiliated category.

Thirty sources from both newspapers fell into the Parent category. Twenty females, or 67 percent, were described simply as a mother in both newspapers. Ten males, or 33 percent, were described as a father.

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[143] Delano Brown et al. "Invisible Power...," 45-54.

Table 9
Status levels of female and male sources in both papers.

Status level	Females	Males	Total number
Executive	66 (15%)	385 (85%)	451
Professional	36 (25%)	110 (75%)	146
Spokespeople	20 (42%)	28 (58%)	48
Worker	16 (22%)	58 (78%)	74
Position not specified	15 (47%)	17 (53%)	32
Unafilliated (relatives and friends)	33 (59%)	23 (41%)	56
Parent	20 (67%)	10 (33%)	30
Student	14 (42%)	19 (58%)	33
Prisoner	1 (14%)	6 (86%)	7

The Worker category was populated by sources who were described as clerks and sales associates, factory workers, bar owners, store managers and lower ranking police officers who did not exert the same level of authority as a police captain would. With 74 sources from both newspapers in this category, this was the third highest populated status category. Sixteen females fell into this category, accounting for 22 percent of the source pool, compared to the 58 males, or 78 percent, who fell into this category.

The Spokesperson category captured sources whose job titles specifically included the words "spokesman" or "spokeswoman." It could not be determined from the context of the stories whether these individuals had public relations or media experience, but these sources released information on behalf of named organizations, entities and businesses. Men and women populated this category almost equally. Of the 48 sources in this category, 20, or 42 percent, were females. Twenty-eight males, or 58 percent of the source pool, fell into the Spokesperson category.

The Student category also included fairly equal numbers of men and women. Sources who were enrolled in grade schools, high schools, colleges or other institutions of learning were grouped into this category. Thirty-three sources were identified as students, with 14 females accounting for 42 percent of the source pool. Nineteen males, or 58 percent, completed this category.

Again, in examining the distribution of sources by gender in each category, a familiar pattern emerged. Female sources were more evenly distributed among the various status levels in both newspapers. Male sources, however, were concentrated in the Executive and Professional categories (table 10).

In terms of source status for each paper, the percentages were similar (table 10). In the Executive category, 252 sources from the *Omaha World-Herald* fell into that category compared to the199 sources from the *Des Moines Register*. Eighty-six sources from the *Herald* and 60 sources from the *Register*

comprised the professional ranking. Eighty-eight percent of the sources in the *Herald's* Executive category were males compared to the 82 percent who populated the *Register's* Executive category. In the Professional category, 76 percent of the Herald's sources were males compared to the Register's 75 percent.

Table 10
Status levels of female and male sources in each paper.

Status level	*Omaha World-Herald* Females	Males	*Des Moines Register* Females	Males
Executive	31 (12%)	221 (88%)	35 (18%)	164 (82%)
Professional	21 (24%)	65 (76%)	15 (25%)	45 (75%)
Spokespeople	15 (50%)	15 (50%)	5 (28%)	13 (72%)
Worker	3 (12%)	23 (88%)	13 (27%)	35 (73%)
Position not specified	7 (47%)	8 (53%)	8 (47%)	9 (53%)
Unafilliated (relatives and friends)	15 (60%)	10 (40%)	18 (58%)	13 (42%)
Parent	9 (75%)	3 (25%)	11 (61%)	7 (39%)
Student	7 (50%)	7 (50%)	7 (37%)	12 (63%)
Prisoner	0	1 (100%)	1 (17%)	5 (83%)

The only categories in which a disparity existed between the two newspapers were in the Spokesperson and Worker categories. The *Omaha World-Herald* used 30 spokespeople, almost twice as many as the 18 who

appeared in the *Register*. The *Herald* used equal numbers of men and women in this category. The *Register*, however, quoted five females compared to 13 males.

In the Worker category, the *Herald* used just 26 sources - three females and 23 males. The *Register*, however, quoted 48 sources whose affiliation or job title put them into this category. Thirteen females and 35 males were cited.

The fact that women outnumbered men in the lower status rankings confirmed Tuchman's theme of symbolic annihilation. She noted that females were typically cast in traditional roles, such as mothers and wives, and occupied lower status levels in terms of affiliation in news stories.[144] In this study, most of the sources identified as relatives, friends, spouses and parents were females. The *Register* quoted 16 females who appeared solely because they were somehow related to someone else in the story compared to the 10 male sources identified as relatives or parents. However, four of those 10 male sources were quoted in a story about stay-at-home dads. The *World-Herald* quoted 17 females who were identified as relatives or friends, compared to the six males identified as friends or relatives.

In both papers, only women appeared as sources in stories where they were recipients of service or patients. Three female sources appeared in the *Register* compared to two female sources in the *Herald*. No males were identified as patients or recipients of service.

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[144] Tuchman et al., Hearth & Home...,8-12.

A disparity was also observed in sources who were identified as witnesses, observers, residents and neighbors. The *Register* quoted eight females who were identified in that fashion and no males. The *World-Herald* quoted one female and one male who were described as witnesses, observers, residents or neighbors.

This study also illustrated a point made by Jolliffe. In her content analysis of stories in the 1985 *New York Times*, she noted that the names of male sources were typically coupled with job titles or professions. Females, however, were less likely to be identified by job titles.[145] In this study, females who appeared as sources in the Uaffiliated category because they were relatives or parents typically did not have a job title or profession associated with their names. Males, however, were more likely to also be identified by a profession at some point in the story.

For instance, a story in the Sunday, April 9, *World-Herald* focused on how Omahans used loans and check-cashing services to stretch their budgets. Reporter Steve Jordan quoted seven male and five female sources to illustrate how citizens actually increased their debt by overusing credit cards and check-cashing services. The only example of someone misusing credit in this story was a woman whom Jordan described simply as a "housewife."[146] Later in the story,

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[145] Jolliffe, "Yes! More Content Analyses...," 98.

[146] Steve Jordan, "More Are Using Loans to Make it to Next Payday," Omaha World-Herald 9 April 2000, 1-M.

readers learned the woman was actually on maternity leave, so at some point she was employed. A job title was never included in the story, though.

A similar situation occurred in a March 8 story in the *Omaha World-Herald* that described a measure Iowa lawmakers passed exempting clothing from taxation. The story explained the law, and then quoted one female source who was identified only as "a mother with two children." She explained how the tax break really helped families stretch clothing budgets.[147] Whether or not this woman worked outside the home was never indicated.

Neglecting to indicate a woman's career appeared again in a March 24 story in the *Omaha World-Herald.* Seven sources expressed their opinions about closing Dingerville, the name given the popular recreational vehicle park populated by out-of-towners who have attended Omaha's College World Series through the years. Most of the males quoted had titles such as park director or city councilman associated with their names. The reporter interviewed people who camped at Dingerville, including a man initially identified as a "regular series-goer." Two paragraphs later, readers learned he was an attorney. He wife was quoted too, but only identified as "his wife." Whether or not she worked was never indicated.[148] Actually, the occupations of Dingerville campers seemed irrelevant to the story, so it was interesting that the male camper's occupation was included.

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[147] Chris Clayton, "Tax Break for Clothing Passes House," Omaha World-Herald, 8 March 2000, 15.
[148] Dick Ruggles, "Bell May Toll for Dingerville," Omaha World-Herald, 24 March 2000. 1.

However, in a Thursday, March 16, *World-Herald* article, a male source who appeared in the story because he was a parent was later identified by job title. In a story about the forensics team at a local high school, reporter Henry J. Cordes interviewed students and speech teachers on the team. He also interviewed one male parent. Several paragraphs later, that father was also identified as the president of a Nebraska furniture store.[149]

Along those lines, a front-page story in the March 8 *World-Herald* described how a local man donated half his liver to his mother. Initially, the man was identified simply as a donor. Several paragraphs later, readers learned he was an attorney. Whether his mother worked or had a profession was never indicated.[150]

To be fair, however, the *World-Herald* did run two stories that featured men who were identified only as parents and job titles were not associated with their names, either initially or in later in the story.

The *Des Moines Register* also had instances in which a woman's profession was ignored if she appeared in a story as an unaffiliated source. The paper ran a story in its Monday, February 21, edition that described how four local fathers quit their jobs to stay home and raise their children. The occupations of the fathers - one was a psychology professor, one was a musician, one was a restaurant owner and one was a banker - were all

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[149] Henry J. Cordes, "Teams at Tourney Hoping for Crown," Omaha World-Herald 16 March 2000, 1.

[150] Mary McGrath, "Son Gives Mom Half of Liver in Transplant," Omaha World-Herald 8 March 2000, 1.

mentioned in the story.[151] Yet in the *Des Moines Register's* Thursday, March 16, edition, a story on the front-page of the Lifestyle section described how a woman quit her job to raise her daughter. The woman's previous profession was never mentioned, even though the story examined the adjustments the mother made in her transition from career to stay-at-home mom.[152]

In that same edition of the *Register*, another front-page story in the Lifestyle section discussed how one woman commuted every day from a small town to her job in Des Moines. The woman's job was never indicated.[153] Readers never learned whether the woman was an attorney or factory worker, yet the point of the story was that she chose to commute to work because she enjoyed her job, but wanted to live in a small town.

In the Saturday, April 1, issue of the *Des Moines Register*, readers actually learned about a woman's job when her male boss was identified and quoted. The story described a woman who was locked inside a closet for three days by her son. An update on her condition and speculation about the son's motives were also included. A Drake professor was quoted in the story because the woman worked as his secretary. The professor was identified as a "Drake Theater Arts professor where the victim worked as a secretary."[154]

In the same issue, the *Register* featured a popular café owner who was

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[151] Kathy Dergstrom, "Dad's Work is Child's Play," Des Moines Register 21 February 2000, 1-D.

[152] Gene Erb, "Smaller Town Beckons Iowa Pair," Des Moines Register 16 March 2000, 5-A.
[153] Gene Erb, "She's a Happy Lovilia Commuter," Des Moines Register 16 March 2000, 5-A.
[154] Maggie O'Brien, "Mom Locked in Closet for 3 Days," Des Moines Register, 1 April 2000, 1.

closing his restaurant after 59 years. A male was quoted and identified as a customer who worked at the packing plant for 32 years and was now retired. A woman was quoted and identified simply as "another longtime customer."[155] Actually, the careers of the customers were not important to the story, yet the male customer had a job paired with his name, even though he was retired. The female customer had no further identification linked to her name.

The *World-Herald* and the *Register* each ran one story in which women were quoted because they were the recipients of liposuction and acupuncture services. These women were portrayed as recipients of these services without any indication of whether they were employed. In the Monday, February 21, edition of the *Herald*, reporter Doug Thomas explored liposuction procedures with doctors and patients. Most of the seven sources were doctors and surgeons, although one female nurse was interviewed. The sources who were quoted because they were patients were both females, but no mention was made regarding whether they also worked.[156] Should job titles have been paired with these patients? Job titles might have added to the information presented in the story. If a patient were a TV newscaster, for instance, who used liposuction to present a better image for the camera, including her job title would have further developed the story.

The *Des Moines Register* examined legislation affecting acupuncturists in

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[155] Nick Kilen, "Say Goodbye to Nick," Des Moines Register, 1 April 2000, 1-E.
[156] Doug Thomas, "A Look at Liposuction," Omaha World-Herald, 21 February 2000, 29.

its Monday, February 21, edition. The only patients who appeared in the story were two females and, once again, there was no mention of a career or job for either woman.[157] Again, including a job title or career choice might have enhanced the story. If a patient were a nurse who used acupuncture to ease tension on the job, adding her occupation would have produced a more complete story.

While this was a very small study and sweeping conclusions should not be reached, it appeared that the papers were inconsistent in terms of attaching job titles and occupations to female and male sources, especially if the sources were identified as parents or appeared in the Unaffiliated category.

Research Question 5 - Did female reporters quote more female sources over male sources than did their male counterparts?

Some research has suggested that perhaps female reporters would quote and paraphrase more female sources. A total of 137stories from the *Herald* and 130 stories from the *Register* were analyzed for a total of 267 stories. From that number, 118 stories carried female bylines while 147 stories from both papers were written by men. Of the 281 stories originally included in this study, 14 stories were excluded from this portion of the study because they carried dual bylines indicating a female reporter and a male reporter wrote the story together.

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[157] Thomas O'Donnell, "More Freedom for Acupuncturists," Des Moines Register 21 February 2000, 1-B.

The results indicated that female reporters had not quoted more female sources. Female reporters still quoted more males, so this question yielded a negative answer. In fact, the pattern at both papers appeared almost the same. Regardless of gender, reporters used more male sources than female sources. The ratio of male to female sources, however, differed somewhat based on reporter gender.

In the 63 stories by female reporters in the *Herald*, 50 female sources were used, representing 30 percent of the source pool (table 11). Female reporters quoted or paraphrased 119 male sources, representing 70 percent of the source pool. The female reporters quoted slightly over twice as many men than women in *World-Herald* stories. That ratio jumped, however, when stories by male reporters were examined. Male reporters quoted male sources almost three times as frequently as they quoted female sources. In the 75 stories written by male reporters, 61 female sources, or 23 percent, were cited compared to 205 male sources, or 77 percent of the source pool.

In the *Des Moines Register's* 55 stories written by female reporters, 35 percent of the sources, or 59, were females, compared to the 65 percent, or 108, male sources cited. In the 72 stories with male bylines, 25 percent of the sources, or 60, were females, while 75 percent, or 177, were males. In the *Register*, male reporters favored male sources by the three-to-one margin evident in the *Omaha World-Herald*.

Table 11
Breakdown of reporter gender and sources used.

	World-Herald		*Register*	
	Female sources	**Male sources**	**Female sources**	**Male sources**
Female reporters	50 (30%)	119 (70%)	59 (35%)	108 (65%)
Male reporters	61 (23%)	205 (77%)	60 (25%)	177 (75%)

While this study was not designed to consider reporter gender beyond its relation to sources, an interesting pattern was observed. More stories with male bylines appeared in the Sunday editions of both newspapers, while more stories with female bylines ran in the Wednesday editions of both papers. Of the 17 stories with local bylines in the Sunday *Des Moines Register*, 10 were written by males and seven were written by females. Of the 17 stories that ran in the Sunday *World-Herald*, 13 were written by males and four were written by females.

However, the Wednesday editions of both newspapers carried more stories by female reporters. Of the 30 stories in the Wednesday *Register*, 17 were written by females compared to the six written by males. Two stories carried dual bylines, indicating both a male reporter and a female reporter wrote them. Three stories were excluded because the gender of the reporter could not be determined from the byline.

The *Herald* mimicked that pattern. In its Wednesday paper, 13 stories were written by females compared to the six stories that carried male bylines. Just one story was excluded because reporter gender could not be determined from the byline, while three stories carried dual bylines.

Typically, there were more male bylines in stories from the *Register* every day except Wednesday, as was already discussed, and Saturday, The Saturday edition carried 11 stories by females compared to eight stories by males. In the *World-Herald*, only the Wednesday edition carried more stories with female bylines.

Overall, results of this study confirmed that women were still being symbolically annihilated. As the new millennium dawned, more male sources were quoted in the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Des Moines Register*. Sources typically occupied higher status levels. Male sources dominated the Executive and Professional status categories. For women, the passage of time has not appeared to help much in terms of how they have appeared in newspapers.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

Symbolic Annihilation Continued;

Elite Sources Dominated;

Solving the Problem

Symbolic Annihilation Continued

Male sources dominated

Women have come a long way since the 17th century when colonial Americans routinely used a dunking stool to silence females they considered "scolds" or "nags."[158] Or have they? If one measured the progress of women by the space they have received in newspapers, one might conclude that women have been silenced all along and progress has been minimal, coming only in

[158] Hall Jamieson, Eloquence in an Electronic Age..., 67

baby steps if at all. The views of females have been systematically marginalized in, or even excluded from, newspapers.

This study confirmed what others have revealed in terms of the dominance of male sources, who have typically outnumbered female sources on newspaper pages. In this study, just 27 percent of the 877 sources cited in the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Des Moines Register* were females. Consequently, newspaper readers read direct quotes and paraphrased information from males almost three times as often as they read comments from female sources.

Past studies have yielded similar results. In their 10-year review of front page and metro front-page stories from three daily newspapers, Zoch and VanSlyke Turk discovered that just 20 percent of the sources were females.[159]

Should readers be concerned that so much information has come from male sources? Yes. As consumers of news and citizens in a democracy, the sheer preponderance of male sources may have had far reaching consequences. The status of sources has also affected the news because people who have occupied positions of power and authority have been quoted.

The danger, Zoch and VanSlyke concluded, was that men almost exclusively made and controlled the news. They were typically quoted in an official capacity, so men occupied higher status positions. This frame, the authors pointed out, called attention to the actions of men as being important and

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[159] Zoch and VanSlyke Turk, "Women Making News..." 769.

diverted attention away from women, thus implying women's actions were trivial and had little to do with matters of the world.[160]

As Sigal pointed out in his landmark study of news sources, the content of the news has been shaped through the years by sources who have relayed information to journalists. The people who made the news have shaped the direction of political life in America, he noted.[161] If female voices have been ignored or muted in the press, then the direction of political life has been shaped primarily by men. Actually, the adjective "powerful" should be added to that description because male sources have typically occupied positions of authority and influence.

As a result, Molotch wrote in his chapter in *Home & Hearth*, the mass media have provided a forum for the powerful to communicate their perspectives to the less powerful. The powerful have acted to preserve the status quo, using the news as their tool.[162] In her exploration of source diversity and enterprise reporting, Hansen concurred. She pointed out that average citizens had little chance of airing their views because news stories were so heavily peppered with official sources, documents and interviews. Such reliance on these sources has bolstered the status quo, she added.[163]

Soloski's 1989 examination of locally written stories reflected that idea. He concluded that news accounts were rooted in the power structures of the

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[160] Ibid., 769.
[161] Sigal, Reporters and Officials..., 37.
[162] Molotch, "The News of Women...," 178-181.
[163] Hansen, "Source Diversity...," 474-482.

community because prominent people served as sources. That reliance on official sources, he commented, legitimized a community's power structure. News stories have preserved and protected societal institutions because prevailing thoughts and beliefs have been reinforced and enhanced.[164]

While journalists may have expressed cynicism toward individuals occupying powerful positions, they have traditionally been "reverent toward the *institutions* of power," Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman observed in their book about the 2000 presidential elections.[165] Reporters may have challenged and questioned the men and women who have governed, but their stories and newscasts have seldom questioned the American system of government. Institutions and prevailing ideas have been preserved and protected in the press by such behavior.

In their 1997 book, Douglas M. Fraleigh and Joseph S. Tuman explored the value of freedom of speech by using the marketplace of ideas analogy. Their thoughts, however, seemed relevant to this study. The First Amendment, the authors argued, has protected a vast array of competing, and even distasteful or unpopular, ideas.[166] These views have been articulated and debated in the mass media, where citizens have sifted through various viewpoints to reach important decisions about how they should live and be governed. Free from government

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[164] Soloski, "Sources and Channels...," 864-870.
[165] Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman, The Press Effect. (New York, NY.: Oxford University Press, 2003), 136.
[166] Douglas M. Fraleigh and Joseph S. Tuman, Freedom of Speech in the Marketplace of Ideas, (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 1-15.

restriction, citizens have openly shopped for information and ideas in this marketplace of ideas, just as they would pursue goods and services in an economic marketplace. Fraleigh and Tuman emphasized that the marketplace of ideas favored diversity of thought and expression.

How can such diversity be achieved, though, when news sources have typically been males who have occupied higher status levels? Would female sources have brought different points of view to the marketplace of ideas?

In this study, the absence of female voices in news stories was evident. Women's voices could have added dimension to news stories and articulated other points of view. In fact, some stories in this study almost begged for a female's point of view. For example, a story in the Monday, February 21, *Des Moines Register* debated the use of police review boards. Eight male sources, including police chiefs and Iowa's director of the American Civil Liberties Union, discussed the pros and cons of citizen boards that reviewed police conduct.[167]

Since this story explored how effective review boards were by soliciting thoughts from various sources, comments from one or two females would have seemed logical. Not one female source, however, was quoted in this story. Because women have typically borne the brunt of sexual harassment and domestic abuse, it would have been interesting to know whether they experienced problems with police when reporting those crimes or when trying to get protection orders enforced.

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[167] Daniel P. Finney, "Police Review Boards Debated," Des Moines Register 21 February 2000, 1.

Of the eight sources quoted in the police review board story, all but one fell into the highest status category - Executive. People in lower status levels may have had vastly different experiences and expectations of police behavior, so their input could have added another dimension to this story. How would a young black or Hispanic male have felt about police review boards based on his personal experience with the Des Moines police? It seemed that by focusing only on the comments of male officials, this story was not fully reported.

Another story in the *Des Moines Register*, this time in the Saturday, April 1, issue, also could have benefited from female sources. The story discussed a state report that minority children raised in poverty fared badly in terms of normal growth and development. Infant mortality rates for minority children whose mothers lived under the federal poverty level were also higher, the report noted.[168] The three sources quoted in this story were all males and, once again, all fell into the Executive status category. Because this story affected women so directly as bearers and caregivers of children, it could have been better developed by talking with and quoting female sources.

A story in the Thursday, March 16, issue of the *Omaha World-Herald* could also have been improved by the inclusion of more female sources. In a story about the Nebraska Unicameral's decision to study child-care benefits, three male sources were quoted compared to one female, who was a Nebraska

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[168] Lynn Okamota, "Minority Children Fare Badly," Des Moines Register 1 April 2000, 1.

state senator.[169] However, this story explored whether benefits were fair to families and single parents - an issue that has directly affected females. Comments from average, working women were not included in this story, even though readers might have gained a better understanding of the problem through the inclusion of such sources.

In two stories in the *Register*, female sources, although in the minority, were quoted, but how they were treated raised questions. A story in the Thursday, March 16, issue described how shopping mall development would affect retailers and customers. Six males were quoted compared to just one female attorney. The female attorney's one comment was paraphrased and combined with that of her client, so the reporter attributed the information to both sources.[170]

In the Sunday, April 9, issue of the *Register*, a story about a land sale drew comments from city planners and residents. One female source was initially identified as a neighbor. It was not until the seventh paragraph from the end of the story, however, that readers learned this woman was also on the planning commission, the organization charged with determining the fate of the land in question.[171] In fact, her role on the planning commission seemed at least as important as her role as a neighbor. Consequently, it appeared strange that her

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[169] Robynn Tysver, "Lawmakers Approve Studying Nebraska Child Care Benefits," Omaha World-Herald, 16 March 2000, 18.
[170] William Ryberg, "Mall Would Shake Up Retailers," Des Moines Register, 16 March 2000, 1-D.
[171] Lee Rood, "100-Acre Property for Sale in Des Moines," Des Moines Register, 9 April 2000, 1-B.

official job on the planning commission was left out until almost the end of the story.

Why have female sources been so slighted in newspaper stories? This study was really not designed to answer that important question, and scholarly research on the topic has been limited. The 1999 study by Blanks Hindman et al. suggested that in communities with minorities fully integrated into societal structures and organizations, newspapers were more likely to quote minority sources.[172] In other words, pluralistic communities spawned diversity in newspaper sources. Although the Blanks Hindman study did not specifically consider females as minority sources, perhaps the same concept could be applied. In Omaha, for instance, all city council members at the time of this study were men. Consequently, a story specifically about a city council meeting would have quoted men as sources because only men comprised the council.

Consequently, studying the power structures of a given community might shed some light on the problem. Perhaps women have not been fully integrated into business and government, so they have not been readily available as sources.

Research has also indicated that journalists have ranked various factors in determining their sources. The 1994 study of 121 journalists by Powers and Fico found that the three least influential variables in source selection were pressure from advertising departments, source gender and the newspaper's policy on

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[172] Blanks Hindman et al, "Structural Pluralism, Ethnic Pluralism...," 250.

political issues, with 93 percent of the respondents indicating the gender of a source was seldom or ever influential.[173] The most important factors for source selection, according to this study, were source credibility, source accessibility and time pressure.[174]

In other words, when reporters faced a deadline, they quoted the most reliable person they could find with time to talk at that moment. Were these the best sources? Were these even the most appropriate or representative sources? Such questions have traditionally been hard to answer. One might wonder, though, whether a reporter's source selection would have differed depending on how much time he or she had to write the story. If a reporter had several weeks to write a story, as opposed to several hours, perhaps his or her story would have displayed greater source diversity simply because the reporter had time to track down and interview the best sources. Deadline pressures were not considered in this study, but it would have been interesting to know how much time each reporter had to prepare his or her story to compare that factor with source diversity.

Elite Sources Dominated

The preponderance of higher ranking, or elite sources, was also evidenced in this study. Of the 877 sources quoted in this study, 451 fell into the

[173] Powers and Fico, "Influences on Use of Sources...," 89.
[174] Ibid., 90.

highest ranking Executive category while 146 sources were grouped in the Professional category, the second highest status ranking. Almost two-thirds of the sources quoted in this study, or 597, occupied the two highest-ranking status levels - Executive and Professional. Just 102 sources in these two categories were females, compared to the 495 male sources who occupied the two highest status levels.

Where were the carpenters and bricklayers, the store clerks and the telemarketers? They were notably absent from this study, which reaffirmed the fact that the views of everyday men and women have typically been excluded from newspapers, even though researchers have found that sources have indeed shaped the news. In his 1993 study of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, Smith noted that different sources relayed different information based on their affiliations. Sources who represented the oil industry portrayed the spill as far less damaging than did sources associated with the environment or the state of Alaska.[175] With that in mind, readers must wonder how news has been shaped if primarily higher-ranking people, or elite sources, have been quoted. In the Des Moines *Register's* story about the police review boards mentioned earlier, one would assume that people occupying lower status levels would have thought differently about police conduct or even suffered actual experiences of police misconduct. Consequently, comments from these people could have provided more balance when coupled with the views of higher-ranking officials.

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[175] Smith, "News Sources and Power Elites...," 399.

Actually, Hall Jamieson and Waldman wrote that journalistic practices, including the process of source selection, have produced biases in reporting. They concluded that:

> Reporters have a bias toward the use of official sources, a bias toward information that can be obtained quickly, a bias toward conflict, a bias toward focusing on discrete events rather than persistent conditions, and a bias toward the simple over the complex.[176]

Has the process of teaching and training journalists contributed to the problem? While educators and researchers have debated what courses journalists should take, not much discussion has focused on how the nuts and bolts of journalism should be taught and practiced. Something as important as source selection should be fully explained and emphasized in journalism courses. Journalism students should be required to scrutinize their sources with as much diligence as they have devoted to lead writing and story structure. Students must be taught how sources have shaped the news and understand the importance of seeking out diverse thoughts and opinions.

This study further revealed that female sources, especially if they appeared in stories as parents, relatives, witnesses, neighbors or recipients of service, were less likely to have job titles associated with their names. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to be identified by a job title. Jolliffe noted in her 1993 commentary that this practice of defining male and female sources by job titles had ramifications for both men and women. Men were seen as paychecks,

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[176] Hall Jamieson and Waldman, The Press Effect..., 170.

without physical attributions and emotions, while women were seen primarily as females in traditional roles. Such descriptions of both sexes perpetuated stereotypes, she added, and were a disservice to men and women.[177]

Source affiliation, typically represented by job title, has served as a signal to readers, Lasorsa and Resse explained. Readers have used source affiliation to determine a source's expertise. That has allowed readers to judge the veracity and importance of a source's comments, the authors added.[178]

Consequently, the inclusion of job titles has been important in news stories, but in this study, it sometimes appeared as though women, even when identified by a job, were not treated the same as men were. Also, it was sometimes impossible to determine whether women had professions when they appeared as sources in the Unaffliated or Parent categories, as indicated in the results section. No clear-cut policy of when to include job titles seemed evident in stories from the *World-Herald* and the *Register* because the *Herald* and the *Register* used rather casual descriptions of affiliation when identifying women in some stories.

For example, an article in the March 24 issue of the *Register* described the history of the popular snack cake Twinkies and quoted two female sources. Each source was described simply as "an employee" of the Hostess Bakery and its thrift store.[179] Another story in the February 16 issue of the *Register* identified

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[177] Jolliffe, "Yes! More Content Analyses!" 93-97.
[178] Lasorsa and Resse, "News Source Use..." 60-71.
[179] Kimberly Murphy, "Twinkies selling Just Like Hotcakes," Des Moines Register, 24 March 2000, 2-B.

a female source by name, then added, "who works at PBS landscaping."[180] The source was used in a story as someone who witnessed traffic problems along a busy street.

An article about Republican George Grogan's quest for a Senate seat in the Sunday, April 9, issue of the *Herald* quoted two females who worked for the candidate. In both cases, the only affiliation given both women was that they "worked for Grogan."[181] In what capacity had they worked for Grogan, though? Someone who worked as his campaign manager, for instance, would have had a different perspective on the candidate than would someone who answered phones in his office. In this case, including specific job titles would have helped readers better understand the source's perspective and judge the information.

What was most striking about the casual descriptions of women's jobs, however, was that the same could not be said of male sources. Male sources in this study were never identified simply as "an employee" or described as someone who "worked for" a business or individual. When male sources were identified by job title, their status was always indicated. For example, a story in the Monday, February 21, issue of the *World-Herald* about the census effort featured comments from a male source who was described as a census official.[182] The status of the source created a subtle nuance in this story because a "census official" sounded more important than just as census worker. The

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[180] Patt Johnson, "John Drivers too Eager on Beaver," Des Moines Register, 16 February 2000, 1-AT.
[181] Jason Gertzen and C. David Kotok, "Grogan's Path," Omaha World-Herald, 9 April 2000, 1
[182] Cindy Gonzalez, "Census Challenge: First Find the Counter," Omaha World-Herald, 21 February 2000, 9.

assumption was that a census official occupied a more powerful position in the organization and was therefore imparting more valuable information.

Both newspapers wavered in terms of when a woman's job title was included, especially if the woman appeared in the story in the Parent or Unaffiliated category. For instance, a *World-Herald* story on April 9 by Steve Jordan quoted seven males and five females to explain how Omahans actually increased their debt by overusing advance check-cashing services. The sole example of someone misusing credit was a women identified as a "housewife." [183]

The AP Stylebook, which has governed spelling, punctuation, capitalization and word usage for newspaper reporters for decades, has suggested that language be inclusive rather than exclusive. Thus, firefighters, according to the book, has become the acceptable term to describe those who fight fires because the term can be applied to men and women. The Stylebook contained no listing for the term "housewife."

Further in this story, readers learned this woman was on maternity leave, so she must have been employed at some time. When reporting and writing, this author has used this rule: if someone's job description or title enhanced, explained or somehow related to the story, it should be included. Was this woman's job important to the story? Possibly, especially if she were an attorney who still had to use advance check-cashing services to make it from payday to

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[183] Jordan, "More Are Using Loans..." 1-M.

pay day. That would have added an entirely new dimension to the story. In fairness to the reporter, though, one should consider another possibility. The woman quoted may have identified herself to the reporter as a housewife and omitted any other job or career information. It was puzzling, however, that the reporter wrote that a source was on maternity leave, then omitted following that up with a job title or description of her work.

In another story in the March 24 *World-Herald*, the fate of a popular camper trailer park known as "Dingerville" was debated. The park has appeared in conjunction with the College World Series in Omaha and has been populated by out-of-towners who lived there during the baseball games. The reporter included comments from people who regularly camped there, including one man initially described as "regular series-goer."[184] Two paragraphs later, readers learned he was an attorney. Was this source's job critical to this story? Was his profession important for readers to know so they could better understand the story? Perhaps an even better question would be whether this source's job would have been included if he worked in a grocery store or on a construction site. The man's wife was also named in the story and one of her comments was paraphrased, but she was described only as his wife. Her profession - if she had one - was not a part of the story. Why was the man's job title included in this story while no mention was given to the woman's profession?

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[184] Ruggles, "Bell May Toll for Dingerville...," 1.

The *Des Moines Register* also ran stories in which job titles or professions of female sources were ignored. In its February 21 issue, the *Register* interviewed four local fathers who quit their jobs to stay home to raise their children. Their former professions were included as part of the story, which made sense because it gave readers an idea of what they had given up professionally.[185] This story concluded by noting that one father, a psychologist and writer, could still work from home while others, although happy enough with their decisions now, might reconsider as their children grew.

However, a woman's job was omitted in a similar story. A front-page story in the *Register's* Lifestyle section on March 16 featured a woman who quit her job to stay home and raise her daughter.[186] The story focused on how the couple made their decision and how it affected their family. In this case, the woman's profession was never mentioned, although it had a direct bearing on the story. The story also described some of the adjustments the woman made since she was not working, but ended with the family satisfied with their move. Knowing the woman's occupation would have added important, relevant information to the story.

Throughout this thesis, the theme of symbolic annihilation was used to illustrate how poorly women have fared in newspaper pages. Such selectivity in including women's job titles or professions has reinforced the annihilation

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[185] Bergstrom, "Dad's Work is Child's Play," 1-D.
[186] Erb, "Smaller Town Beckons Iowa Pair," 5-A.

because information about their careers has not been consistently included in stories. Like it or not, a source's occupation and status within an organization has helped readers judge the information imparted by the source. A source described in a story as an "official" has carried more weight with the reader than a source described simply as a "worker."

The ultimate annihilation, however, occurred in a Wednesday, March 8, obituary in the *Omaha World-Herald* when half the article explained why a longtime Omaha teacher never married.[187] After devoting over 30 years of her life to teaching, Dorothy Cathers' nephew was quoted explaining why his aunt never married. Actually, Cathers had been the subject of past stories in the *Herald*. When she died, the reporter included some of Cathers' comments from past articles in the March 8 obituary. The information selected, however, also focused on why the successful teacher never married. In the 13-paragraph story, six paragraphs discussed Cathers' marital status. Was Cathers' single status as interesting and important to the story as her devotion to teaching was? Traditionally, obituaries have celebrated the life of the deceased.

While it was perhaps unusual that Cathers never married, it seemed as though her obituary should have focused more on her teaching. Interestingly enough, Cathers was the aunt of Omaha financier Warren Buffett, which was also pointed out in her obituary.

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[187] Paul Goodsell, "Rites for Longtime Time Cathers," Omaha World-Herald, 8 April 2000. 18.

While obituaries included in this study typically reported the deceased's marital status, this was the only obituary in which that was a major focus. It would have been interesting to see how a man who never married would have been described in his obituary. Sadly, this obituary cast Cathers in one of the typical feminine roles noted by Tuchman et al.[188] Cathers' status in this story derived from men, namely her famous nephew Warren Buffett. Her marital status was also a major focus of the story. A more interesting frame would have been the fact that Cathers spent 30 years of her life in Omaha classrooms. Comments from former students or colleagues could have been included rather than paragraph after paragraph detailing her single status. Ultimately, the article sounded almost apologetic regarding her marital status.

Should the symbolic annihilation be extended to include female reporters? This study indicated that female reporters still quoted more male sources than female sources. In fact, female reporters quoted over twice as many men as women in their stories. Male reporters, however, quoted male sources almost three times as often as they quoted or paraphrased female sources. In terms of percentages, 70 percent of the sources in stories by female reporters were males, compared to the 77 percent of male sources quoted by male reporters.

While the percentages were fairly close, it was somewhat encouraging that female reporters quoted female sources a bit more frequently. Larger questions remained, however, that were not specifically addressed by this study.

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[188] Tuchman et al., Making News....,18-25.

For instance, was this a reflection of the training journalists have received through the years? In other words, have journalism schools emphasized quoting elite sources rather than pointing out the benefits of source diversity?

Another question involved deadlines. Have deadlines been the culprit and forced journalists, regardless of gender, to rely on official sources who have traditionally been easier to reach?

One final thought should be added. When this study was conducted, the composition of *Herald* and *Register* newsrooms was not known. Whether more male reporters were employed was not evident, nor was it known whether the papers employed more male editors. That knowledge could be applicable, as could the atmosphere of the newsroom. If female reporters were in the minority, that might have influenced them to adopt modes of behavior modeled by male reporters. Female reporters could have subconsciously believed they should not seek out female sources lest they be accused of slanting the news.

Similarly, the influence of editors was not considered in this study. If female reporters submitted stories to primarily male editors, the predominance of males in the newsrooms could once again have subconsciously influenced female reporters.

Without more study, however, firm conclusions regarding this result should not be made. It was interesting, however, to see how closely results regarding source usage by female reporters paralleled source usage by male reporters.

Solving the Problem

How should the source problems be resolved? First, journalists must rethink how sources have been used in the news. Rather than covering all stories from the top down through the use of elite sources, journalists could approach news from a different perspective. People actually affected by news should be quoted and paraphrased to balance the use of official sources. The debate about stem cell research today, for instance, should be covered on two fronts. It has been appropriate to quote researchers and Bush administration officials because they have articulated their position on research and set public policy. However, those who would be most affected by the research should be quoted with as much, or even more, frequency. Journalists have employed this approach in writing about disasters, which have traditionally been peppered with comments from ordinary citizens who witnessed and were affected by the disaster.

While much of this study bore out the symbolic annihilation of women in terms of stereotyped treatment and frames that called attention to the traditional roles of women, two other results merited discussion. First, very few anonymous sources were used, and second, a pattern of female and male bylines emerged based on days of the week.

In terms of anonymous sources, only four of the 281 stories included in this study attributed information to unnamed sources. The *Register* attributed information using the generic reference "police said" just once. The *Herald* also

used the generic attribution "police said" once. In addition, the *Herald* described one source as a "mayoral aide" in one story and another source as a "Hagel aide." The fact that only four sources were not identified by name seemed interesting. Was proximity a factor? Researchers have suggested that greater source diversity has surfaced when reporters covered events located in their geographical communities. Could there be a connection between the use of anonymous sources and geographic proximity? While this study was not designed to explore or answer such a question, it was still interesting. In fact, it was only after results of this study were coded that it became apparent that the overwhelming majority of sources were identified by name.

The second interesting result, which also surfaced after coding was completed, involved reporter gender and days of the week. More stories written by males appeared in the Sunday editions of both newspapers, as noted in the results chapter. Typically, Sunday newspapers have been the largest editions of the week in terms of pages and sections. Were more stories by males run on Sundays because papers were larger and audiences greater? Wednesday papers displayed the opposite result in that females wrote more stories than males. Wednesday newspapers have typically included grocery ads. Were more female writers used in Wednesday editions in an effort to appeal to female readers who have traditionally been interested in grocery ads?

Because this study was small, it would be inappropriate to make sweeping conclusions about this result. It may have simply been a coincidence that Sunday

papers featured more stores by males. It may have also been an anomaly and if more weeks were studied, results might have been different.

Overall, results of this study were disappointing. It used to be that women who were quoted as sources were identified as "Miss" or "Mrs." Smith. Growing awareness and pressure from women caused newspapers to rethink such identification. Martial status was seldom important in news stories and men were never identified by anything but last names. The inequity today, however, seemed to stem from how few women were used as sources and how frequently sources with high status levels were quoted. This practice has produced news shaped by males in positions of authority and influence. They have represented only one segment of the population. Today, when information has evolved into such a precious commodity, it makes more sense to open the pages of newspapers to those with different points of view.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

Male Sources Dominated - Why?

Suggestions for Reporters:

Limitations of Study

Male Sources Dominated – Why?

It may have been naive to believe that male and female sources would be treated equally in today's newspapers. However, given the advances women have made in business, education, government and industry, such a conclusion did not seem unreasonable. With the growing number of women in all aspects of public life, one might easily have concluded that reporters would have little choice but to quote male and female sources almost equally.

Unfortunately, such was not the case, as this study indicated. Male sources comprised 73 percent of the source pool in the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Des Moines Register*. Male sources especially dominated crime, government and business stories. Male sources were typically identified in stories by job title, while females were not and appeared in stereotypical roles as wives, mothers and other relatives, thus continuing the symbolic annihilation set forth by Tuchman et al. in 1978. Male sources were heavily represented in the two highest status source levels - Executive and Professional - while females comprised a scant 15 percent of the source pool in the Executive category and 25 percent in the Professional category.

The first obvious conclusion to be drawn from this study was that male sources appeared almost three times as often in the *Herald* and *Register*. The second obvious conclusion was that high-ranking, official sources, also described as elite sources, appeared far more frequently in this study than did sources in lower-ranking status categories.

Consequently, the two newspapers failed to meet the goals articulated by the Hutchins Commission in 1947. In lobbying for a press free from government restraint, the commission charged the press with covering all sides of an issue so that truthful and complete reporting would emerge. The *Herald* and the *Register*, by relying primarily on male and official sources, may not have presented all sides of an issue. In fact, by quoting high-ranking male officials, the newspapers may not have depicted the news accurately.

On the other hand, one must also consider the societal institutions the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Des Moines Register* covered. As was pointed out earlier, the composition of Omaha's city council was all male at the time of this study. It would be hard to ascertain just how many institutions reporters covered actually had equal numbers of females employed and available to be quoted by reporters. Perhaps this study hinted at a larger problem: were fewer females cast in leadership roles in both cities? While this does not explain the disparity in terms of how females were linked with job titles, it does raise broader questions about how fully women participate in social, educational and political institutions in today's cities.

Why have these problems with source usage occurred?

In some cases, the traditions and practices of journalism may have been to blame. In his 2003 article regarding objectivity, Brent Cunningham observed that the journalistic standard of objectivity has led reporters to rely on official sources. Quoting officials has been the quickest way to obtain two sides of an issue. In their pursuit of truth through objectively reporting the pros and cons of an issue, journalists have ended up with "too much 'official' truth," Cunningham concluded.[189] In other words, the views of high-ranking officials shaped the news with little balance from the opposite end of the spectrum. Ordinary citizens have rarely made their way into the news unless they were victims of crime or witnesses to an event. Also, by relying on a pro and con side, journalists may

[189] Brent Cunningham, "Re-thinking Objectivity," Columbia Journalism Review, (July-August 2003): 26.

have considered issues as two-sided, when in fact there may have been many sides to an issue.

Another problem, Cunningham pointed out, has been the constant, 24-hour news cycle, which has left journalists little time to uncover anyone but official sources.[190] Those officials have provided quick, instantaneous information, but the readiness of their views may have also prevented journalists from seeking out other sources. Journalists have always faced deadlines and time pressures, knowing they have only a limited amount of time to research, report and write their stories. Cunningham added that time pressures may have also forced journalists to quote official sources far too often.[191]

A personal experience can be used to illustrate the problem. In a recently completed story for a local magazine about planning for weddings, five companies that advertised in the phone book for wedding planning services were contacted. Four of the companies provided someone to speak with and all of these sources were females. The fifth company provided the name of a male wedding planner. He, however, had not called back by the deadline. Consequently, two of the four female wedding planners were quoted in the story. Would a male wedding planner have offered a different perspective? Perhaps not, but the deadline drove source selection and the male source's comments and input were not even given a chance to be heard.

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[190] Ibid., 27.
[191] Ibid., 28.

This was not a story of great consequence but was instead a soft news, or feature, story, so the stakes were not as high. Whether a male wedding planner was quoted was not as crucial to readers as a story about the effects of the national debt or a prescription drug plan would be. The point, however, was that the daily practices of journalism made a definite impact on source selection.

The nature of the news story has also driven source selection. Literature has indicated that enterprise stories, which have afforded reporters more time to investigate issues, have yielded greater source diversity. On the other hand, reporters who have covered breaking news, such as the terrorist attacks on September 11, have not had the luxury of time to search for the best sources. Their task was to communicate the who, what, where, when and why of an evolving story.

Cunningham addressed that issue when he interviewed journalist Bob Woodward about his reporting. Woodward noted that when he wrote his books, he had time to develop and cultivate a diverse array of sources. That afforded him a better picture of how events unfolded rather than a manufactured view of reality based on one or two sources.[192]

The "marketplace of ideas" analogy has frequently been used as an argument to support First Amendment rights. The idea has been that different media outlets have provided different perspectives on important issues of the day. Citizens have "shopped" freely at various outlets, then decided which views

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[192] Ibid., 28.

to accept or reject. Such freedom of information, according to the analogy, has meant that Americans have been exposed to various viewpoints in their quest for the truth. Society has benefited as citizens have debated various points of view.

In terms of news sources, however, one must question whether the marketplace of ideas concept has existed. True, Americans have had multiple outlets for receiving their news. If, however, Americans have relied on newspapers, how much diversity of thought and opinion has really been available? If newspaper sources have primarily been high-ranking officials and males, diversity of thought and opinion may have been stunted.

Suggestions for Reporters

What "he said" and "she said" have been important components of news writing for decades. Reporters have been instructed to let sources develop news stories. Unfortunately, most stories have relied on paragraph after paragraph of "he said," with just an occasional "she said" sprinkled in. Awareness should be the first step for reporters. Journalists should be urged to scrutinize both the gender and status level of sources. This would obviously be harder to do in breaking news stories, but if editors stressed source diversity in their newsrooms, the idea would at least be planted in reporters' minds.

Reporters would rightfully chafe if charged with quoting all Republican sources or all Democratic sources, understanding that each party had its own

"spin" on an issue. Why should it be any different for men and women who act as news sources?

More emphasis should also be placed on source diversity in journalism classrooms and courses, from the beginning news writing classes students take to graduate-level courses. News writing courses have focused on lead writing, story structure, types of quotations, news values and ethics. However, source selection has become an important component of daily journalism and should receive attention in journalism schools.

Finally, perhaps greater source diversity could be achieved if journalists got into the habit of asking themselves this question: who is most affected by this news? For example, a story about fetal stem cell research could be enhanced by comments from those most affected by any decision. In other words, people who have suffered from diseases that fetal stem research could potentially cure could provide valuable insight into the issue. If reporters considered who is most affected and tried to incorporate those views into stories, perhaps reliance on official, elite sources could be reduced.

Limitations of Study

Actually, this study may have raised more questions than it answered. It was a small study of just two daily newspapers. Future research that would include additional daily newspapers would be useful. This study could also be

applied to current issues of prestige papers, such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, to determine the source gender balance in these publications.

This study was not designed to answer the key question: why are more males quoted? In fact, little qualitative or quantitative research regarding this issue could be found. Interviews with journalists as they covered and wrote their stories might shed light on their reasoning. Researchers could actually observe newsrooms to see whether editors raised the issue of source diversity. Further study of journalism textbooks and classrooms would be needed to determine whether source diversity was discussed.

This issue has ramifications for more than just journalists, so discussion should not be limited to reporters, editors and journalism teachers. For instance, despite the advances of women into government, perhaps the lack of source diversity in government-related stories reflected a more basic problem: men may still outnumber women in high-ranking government institutions, so they were more readily available to be quoted.

While this study examined source gender, future studies should consider ethnicity as well. How many African Americans were quoted in newspapers? How many Hispanics made their way into the pages of today's papers? Diversity should not be limited to gender alone and additional research is needed to determine how minorities have fared. In fact, literature on this topic was scant in terms of newspaper sources and ethnic diversity, although there were some

studies regarding the portrayal of minorities on television. If women have been symbolically annihilated, minorities have probably suffered the same fate.

More research into any correlation between reporter gender and days of the week would also be interesting. Finally, when stories in this study were grouped into categories based on story type, some of the categories were very small. Involving more newspapers or studying a few papers for extended lengths of time would hopefully yield larger categories.

When this author began her career as a newspaper reporter in 1974, she was one of two female reporters at the newspaper. When interviewed for a job at the *Omaha World-Herald* in 1975, this author was asked how she felt about covering women's news such as weddings. (This author would have preferred to slit her wrists rather than write about the bride's full-length veil or who the groom's parents were.) Thankfully, much has changed for women journalists since the mid-70s. However, challenges remain, and perhaps the greatest obstacle facing journalists today is source diversity. The time has come to stop the symbolic annihilation of women in the pages of newspapers. Their voices need to be heard.

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Finally, this study concludes on a hopeful note. The first step toward correcting a problem is awareness. Rather than an indictment of the media, this study should be interpreted as a way of improving the performance of newspapers so these important institutions can better reflect and celebrate the diversity of American culture.

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